DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 129 452 PS 008 876

AUTHOR	Alward, Keith R.
TITLE	Arranging the Classroom for Children.
INSTITUTION	Far West Lab. for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	227p.; For related documents, see PS 008 875-891
AVAILABLE FROM	Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103 ($7.95)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$12.71 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; *Classroom Arrangement; Classroom Environment; Classroom Furniture; Classroom Materials; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Resources; Elementary Education; Open Education; *Performance Based Teacher Education; *Physical Facilities; Preschool Education; Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS	Far West Laboratory for Educational R and D; *Flexible Learning System

ABSTRACT

This unit of the Flexible Learning System (FLS), is designed to help adults working with children aged 4-8 achieve an optimal classroom arrangement for a variety of activities and child groupings. The unit focuses on the interaction between space, materials, classroom activities and educational goals, and is particularly appropriate for educators interested in providing an open education setting. Section I describes six basic classroom areas in terms of 12 variables covering size, boundaries, materials, working surfaces, and functions. The relationship of these variables to classroom operations and the solution of management problems through classroom arrangement and modification of the six basic areas are explored. Section II provides an illustrated and descriptive guide to physical facilities and resources. Topics covered are: storage, working surfaces and seating, the floor, raised work and play platforms, enclosed areas, room and area dividers. A reference list of publications, films, and additional resource addresses is included. Each chapter contains a topic introduction, learner-activities, and a follow-up discussion. Learner-activities include classroom observations, simulation and decision-making problems. Activity forms are provided for recording activity results. Related FLS units: "Managing the Preschool Classroom"; "An Introduction to Early Childhood Education." (Author/SB)

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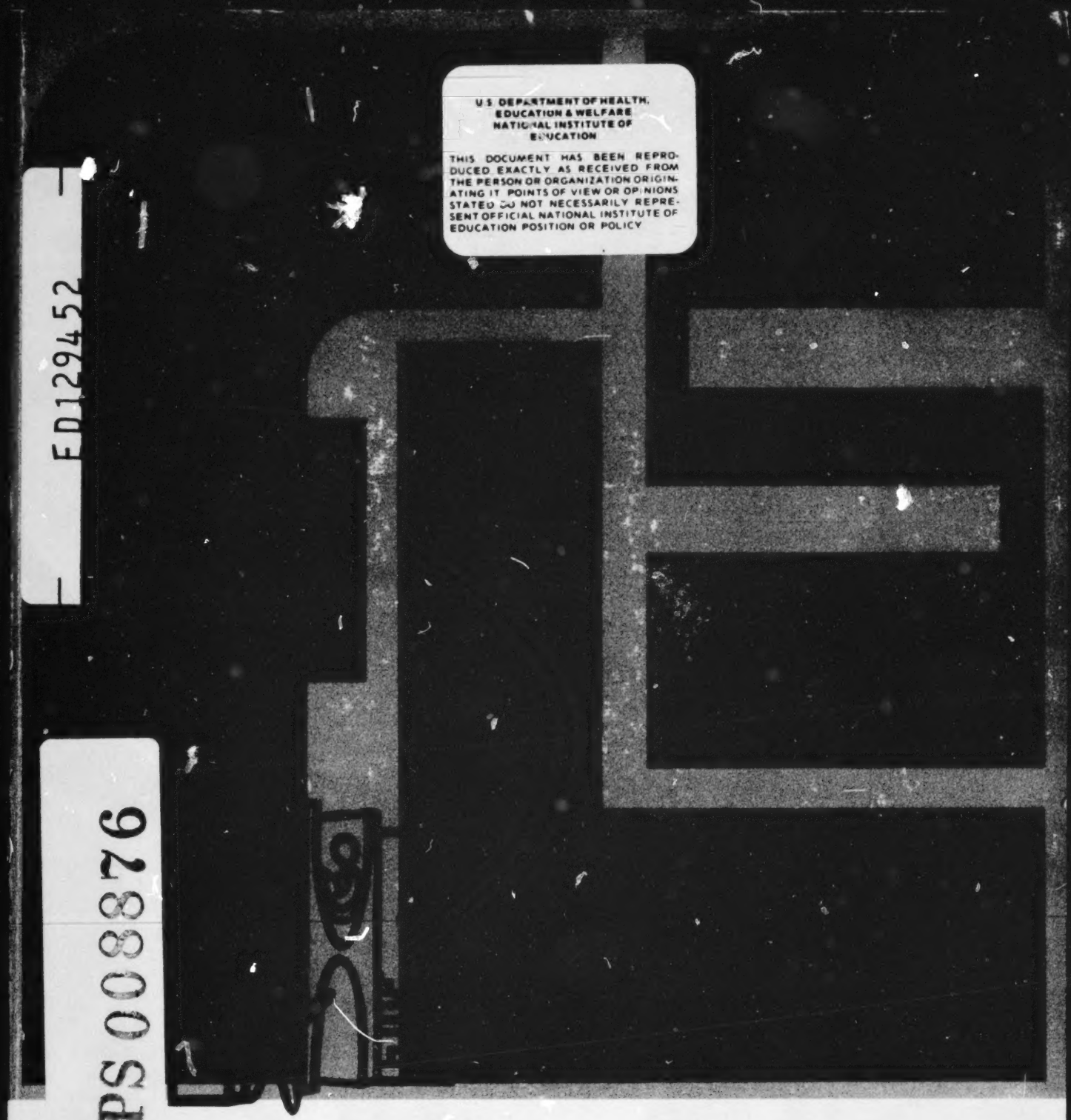

arranging the classroom for children

2

THE FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM—COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING UNITS FOR ADULTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Arranging the Classroom for Children

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have contributed to the work that went into producing this unit.

The ideas grew out of our efforts to develop instruments for assessing Responsive Model classrooms. Preliminary forms of these instruments were used in many of our Follow Through districts and in some of our national Follow Through training workshops. Both in the field and in workshops, Follow Through staff, from teachers to program directors, have been immensely helpful in their criticisms and enthusiasm.

A preliminary form of this unit was tested with teachers and assistant teachers in the South Alameda County Head Start Program. Their participation in the preliminary testing of the unit contributed greatly to its present form. The cooperation of Mrs. Harriet Ward and her co-workers is very much appreciated.

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During his five years with the Laboratory, he has worked in the field of early-childhood education. Two of these years were spent in evaluating the Responsive Head Start, Follow Through, and Toy-Lending Library programs. Following his activity in program evaluation, he worked on developing instruments for assessing the quality of learning environments for early-childhood education. In addition, he has participated in Responsive Model training for Follow Through personnel and other educators, and has been involved in coordinating the development of learning units within the Flexible Learning System. He is presently developing additional training material on understanding and assessing the intellectual development of young children.

PREFACE

This learning unit has been developed specifically for adults who work either in classrooms or educational centers that serve the needs of young children. However, though this unit deals with arranging classrooms for young children, the ideas presented can be helpful to anyone concerned with arranging an environment for learning -- regardless of the age of the learners.

We have attempted to make this learning unit compatible with the Responsive Education Program which the Laboratory has field tested at Head Start and Follow Through sites across the nation. This program is described in BEYOND "COMPENSATORY EDUCATION" (Catalog No. #1780-01150; Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.). Nevertheless, we firmly believe that the principles presented in this learning unit make it useful for, or adaptable to, the needs of other early-childhood programs.

The unit consists of 12 chapters (six in Section I and six in Section II). Each chapter is organized around an activity with one or more parts. You are encouraged to complete all six of the activities in Section I. Five of these activities require observation in an early childhood classroom or educational setting. If you are not employed in a classroom or center, you will need to arrange with your instructor/coordinator for access to a classroom where you will be welcome on a fairly regular basis during these learning experiences.

The six chapters in Section I deal with types of classroom areas and their relationship to classroom activities. Each chapter deals with a slightly different topic. You should read the chapters in order, working through each one at a time. In each chapter, an activity introduces you to the topic. After completing the activity you can read the follow-up discussion or, if you are in a group that is working cooperatively on this unit, you can discuss the activity and the follow-up material. (If you have not already looked over the Table of Contents, you might do so to get an overview of the unit.)

In some of the Section I chapters, you are asked to observe a classroom. You can determine whether you have observed correctly by reading the follow-up material which gives you more information about the observation activity and its implications. In other chapters there are problems for you to solve, or answers to give. In these cases, the follow-up material will indicate how the developer of the unit would answer the questions or solve the problems.

Section II is organized somewhat differently. Here our purpose is simply to introduce you to types of classroom facilities and resources (such as storage facilities or types of floor covering, etc.), so that you will be better able to achieve the kind of classroom you would like to have. In a sense, Section I is concerned with helping you clarify your goals for arranging the classroom environment, whereas Section II presents some "nuts and bolts" or "how-to-do-it" ideas.

In that section you are encouraged to pick one chapter for which you will complete an activity. However, you should read all of the chapters in Section II because they contain many useful, as well as enjoyable, ideas. This one activity in Section II is designed to help you decide on one change you would make in the classroom. There is no right or wrong answer to this activity. It is simply your decision about what you would change and why.

Although this unit was written so that you can use it in your own, the instructor/coordinator of your training can help you adapt the use of these materials to your own skills, interests, and resources, as well as help you assess your progress. When you have finished the unit, the instructor/coordinator can also help you verify your success in completing the Post-test.

It is important to make clear that not every aspect of the physical environment has been covered in this brief learning unit. For example, you'll find no guidance on light, heat, ventilation, fire safety, bathroom facilities, food preparation facilities, emergency procedures, first-aid equipment and so on. Nor have we dealt with the outdoors environment. Mainly, we have tried to concentrate on activities that relate functionally to curricular and social objectives in the teaching/learning situation.

You will be using a number of processes during your learning experiences. These include: reading, observing, analyzing, computing, inventing, drawing, estimating, and building. If you are working with a group of learners, you will also be involved in discussing and exchanging information.

The learning objectives for this unit are stated on the following page. We hope that you'll find the work both challenging and rewarding, for we share with you the hope that every child you work with responsively will come to enjoy more, and better, opportunities to learn and grow.

I. WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO....

...after you finish this learning unit:

1. Recognize, describe, and evaluate six types of classroom areas recommended for early-childhood education.
2. Recognize the importance of size, function, boundaries, materials, and working facilities as they relate to the functioning of the classroom, the satisfaction of the children, and the attainment of your teaching goals.
3. Know how to consider and use a number of variables in order to make changes in one or more classroom areas.
4. Use observation of children as they interact with each other and with classroom facilities in order to make judgments about the organization of the classroom.
5. Recognize the value of permanent learning centers in the classroom.
6. Know how to change the number and location of classroom areas to suit your own needs and those of the children.
7. Plan two "how-to-improve-it" projects of your own choice.

II. THE MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

A. A copy of the handbook entitled Arranging the Classroom for Children.

B. A trained instructor/coordinator who can check your progress.

C. Pencil (or pen) and note pad.

III. You will need 25 hours to do the work in this learning unit.

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SECTION I

Arranging and Evaluating Classroom Areas

CHAPTER 1

SIX CLASSROOM AREAS

Introduction

There are many types of classroom areas and many ways to describe and define these areas. The first chapter of this learning unit introduces you to six basic types of classroom areas. We will refer to these as the six primary classroom areas. In the process of acquainting you with these six areas, we will also introduce you to a way of describing areas in terms of their characteristics rather than in terms of the type of curricular activity that the areas may serve or the materials that are used in the areas.

If you are familiar with preschool education, you are probably already used to thinking of different classroom areas. For some time, preschool and kindergarten classrooms have been arranged with a variety of activity areas. Most often these areas are described in terms of what children do in the area or the materials that are used in the areas. For example, you may have heard of "block areas," "housekeeping areas," "reading areas," and so on. Today the trend in arranging the classroom into learning areas, activity centers, resource areas, and so forth has extended to the early elementary school years as well. This is especially true of those classrooms where the teacher is trying to teach in an individualized and personalized way. More and more elementary classrooms are beginning to be organized in terms of curriculum areas such as science areas, mathematics areas, art areas, and writing centers.

Defining or describing areas in terms of the curricular activities (for example, "reading areas") or the materials (for example, "block area") is a limited approach because it does not answer the questions about how the areas are or should be organized and arranged. Of course, it may be feasible to take all the possible types of activity areas (such as reading, science, mathematics,

blocks, etc.) and define the best way of organizing each of them. But since there are as many possible areas as there are activities and materials, this approach could be very time-consuming (especially if you're dealing with classrooms for children ranging from three to eight years of age).

The approach we will take is to talk about areas in terms of their characterisitcs. For example, we will talk about areas in terms of their size, whether materials are stored in the area, how materials are stored there, the type of working facilities in the area, whether the area is used for one or many types of activities, and so on. As you will see, this approach will be much more useful than simply talking about what children study or play at in areas or what materials are used. By describing areas in terms of their characteristics, we will be able to match areas to activities and organize areas so that they support the way we want activities to be carried out. In this way we can achieve a balance that should make your job easier and the children's learning and playing experiences more positive ones.

Before going on in the unit, you should complete ACTIVITY I. This activity and its FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION are designed to acquaint you with the six primary areas and some of the characteristics of areas in general. It will take at least one hour of classroom observation to complete the activity. Before you actually go to a classroom to complete ACTIVITY I, you should make sure that you understand what you are to do and how you will do it. Below we have presented an overview of the activity and instructions for its completion. Read these carefully and then complete the activity.

Overview of Activity I

ACTIVITY I has two parts. First, you will take an observation form (FORM A) and evaluate a classroom (for children three to eight years of

age). You will evaluate the classroom on the basis of whether or not it has at least one of each of the six primary areas. Secondly, if you find that the classroom you are observing does not have at least one of each of the six primary areas, then you should do Part 2 of the activity. This involves deciding what changes would have to be made in the classroom in order that it would have at least one of each of the six primary areas.

You can observe any classroom that is set up to serve children between the ages of three and eight years of age. If you already are working in a primary classroom, preschool site, or day-care center, then observe your own classroom. If you do not work in a classroom, you should make arrangements so that you can go to a room and observe. It is not necessary that you visit the classroom while it is in operation, nor is it necessary that children and adults be in the room while you are observing.

Keep in mind that this first activity is not designed for you to evaluate a classroom to determine whether it is well arranged or poorly arranged. We are interested only in acquainting you with the six types of classroom areas and some characteristics of these areas. The classroom you observe may have none or only some of the six primary areas and yet still be a classroom that is well suited to the activities it is designed to support. To repeat, ACTIVITY I is supposed to help you learn the critical characteristics of the six primary areas. When you know these, we will be able to discuss how a classroom may vary from the recommended six areas and yet still be a well-arranged environment.

Instructions for Activity I

Part 1.

Once you have found a classroom that you can observe, you are ready

to begin ACTIVITY I. First, acquaint yourself with FORM A (page 9). You will use this form for making your actual classroom observation and evaluation. So make sure that you are familiar with and clear about all the information on FORM A. Basically, FORM A lists six types of classroom areas and gives a brief description of each.

Using FORM A is fairly simple. Look around in the classroom. For each of the six primary areas, determine whether the classroom has at least one of each area type. Do not count an area as one of the six primary areas unless you are sure that the area matches all parts of the description on FORM A. Count each area in the classroom as only one of the six primary areas. If a classroom area seems as if it could be considered as more than one of the six primary areas, pick the one that it is most like.

Part 2.

Once you have determined whether or not the classroom you have observed has at least one of each of the six primary areas, you are ready for the second part of ACTIVITY I. If you found all six of the primary areas in the classroom, you're finished with ACTIVITY I and should read the FOLLOW-UP section for ACTIVITY I starting on page 13.

If you did not find all of the six primary areas, you are now asked to determine what changes would have to be made in order for there to be at least one of each of the six primary areas in the classroom. Use FORM B for this purpose (page 11).

a. If there is no area in the classroom that comes even close to the description of one of the six primary areas, then indicate on FORM B that you would change the classroom by including the

missing area. Describe what this area would look like if you were to count it as one of the six primary areas. For example, if you found nothing that looked like a PRIVATE AREA, then indicate that you would include a private area in the classroom and describe what it would look like.

b. If there is an area in the classroom that is close to the description of an area on FORM A, but not close enough to be counted as one of the six primary areas, then indicate how you would change the area so that you could count it as one of the areas on FORM A. For example, if there is a LEARNING CENTER in the classroom but it is large enough for 10 children to work there, then you would suggest on FORM B that the area be changed so that no more than six children could work there. (Look at the description of a LEARNING CENTER on FORM A to see why this change would be suggested.)

After you have prescribed the changes you'd make for the observed classroom so that it would have at least one of each of the six primary areas, finish your work with Chapter 1 by reading the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY I.

Name: _____

FORM A — Presence of Six Primary Areas

(For use in classroom observation. See instructions on page 6.)

DESCRIPTION OF SIX PRIMARY AREAS

Put a check (✓) in the box for each area if the area is present in the classroom.

PRIVATE AREA: A small enclosed area only big enough for 1-2 children. No materials are normally stored in the area and there is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity. There are no chairs and tables in the private area. ☐

INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING: A working area such as a desk and chair. The area is only big enough for 1-2 children. There is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity or for any one particular child. ☐

LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially closed area with surfaces for seating work such as tables and chairs. The area is big enough for at least 3 but no more than 6 children. The area is set up for some specific types of activities and child-accessible materials that are used in the activity are stored in the area. ☐

LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially enclosed area with space for children to work while standing up or sitting on the floor. The area is big enough for 3 but no more than 6 children and is set up for some specific types of activities. Child-accessible materials used in the activities are stored in the area. ☐

GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA: This is an area with working surfaces such as tables where at least 5 but no more than 12 children can work together. The kinds of activities and materials used in this area could easily change from day to day. ☐

LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA: This is a large group area where all or most of the class could meet at the same time. Basically it is a large open area in the classroom. There are no or few tables and chairs occupying the area. ☐

Name: _____

FORM B — Recommended Change for Classroom Observed in Activity I

(Use FORM B after completing FORM A. See instructions on page 6.)

For each of the six areas not completely present in the observed classroom, indicate what changes would have to be made in the room in order for the area to be present. For example, if there is no PRIVATE AREA, describe the changes you'd make so that there would be at least one PRIVATE AREA in the classroom.

PRIVATE AREA

INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING

LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA

LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity I

Responsive Education

The six areas that you have just finished observing are an ideal set of areas. To determine whether they would be appropriate for a particular classroom requires looking at how you want the classroom to function or operate. One model for running a classroom is to keep children quietly sitting at desks and doing work that the teacher assigns. The work may require a limited amount of resources such as workbooks. Maybe in this kind of situation children would be expected to stay seated and not talk to each other except at prescribed times. The six primary areas are not really needed for this type of education. However, this kind of educational setting for young children is both very impractical and, in our minds, undesirable.

We feel that an ideal situation is one where the classroom, with its resources, organization and routines, responds to the child. We have called this approach "Responsive Education" and have developed a Responsive Educational Program for early childhood education. Basically, the responsive educational approach says that the schooling environment must support the child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth and that, in order to do so, it must also provide the child with choices and freedom. Children, we believe, can be helped to become responsible for their own learning and growth if they are also helped to take on responsibility for decisions about what they will work on, how long they will work on it, whom they will work with, what they will work with, where they will work, and for what purpose. If the schooling environment can help children make these decisions, then it is "responding" to children. Today there are many similar approaches to education. "Open," "individualized," and "personalized" education are some of the more familiar labels.

Of course, though this form of education may sound ideal, you may realize that it is difficult to achieve. There must be a balance between what the educational community expects of the child and what the child expects of himself. Likewise, there must be a balance between your own expectations, abilities, and tolerances and the expectations and demands made by the children. But Responsive Education can be achieved and it can yield exciting results. We have seen evidence of it in hundreds of classrooms.

This brief description of Responsive Education may have raised many questions in your mind, some of which may be answered by other learning units. For the moment, however, we will leave the specifics of Responsive Education and focus instead on the general implications that this form of education has for the arrangement of the classroom environment.

Characteristics of Classroom Areas

If you were operating an open-education or responsive classroom, different children would be pursuing different activities at the same time. Also, whether doing the same basic thing or not, children may be using different materials, working in different places, and interacting in different social groupings. Children might work by themselves or with a small or large group of children or with an adult. Likewise, children may be working in a variety of situations: while standing up, sitting, lying down, and so on. Added to these "what, with what, where, with whom, and how" issues, we need to consider the timing of activities and how resources are distributed and retrieved. In a responsive classroom, children make their own decisions (within limits) about joining or leaving activities. They also make decisions about the pacing of an activity; half an hour of block play today, none tomorrow, and an hour next day. Also, children select the materials they need for their own

activities.

From looking at what children are doing and how they are pursuing their activities, we can derive a number of activity characteristics that relate to characteristics of areas. Without talking any further about activities, let's consider five issues that lead to describing characteristics of areas.

1. SIZE:

Size is one issue that characterizes areas. The size of an area will influence how the area functions. Some activities need more room than others, and larger groups of people working together require more room. Areas can vary in their size.

2. FUNCTION:

An area can be set up for a specific function or purpose or it may be set up for many purposes. For example, the kitchen is generally specifically set up for the preparation of food, even though other activities may go on there as well. The living room, on the other hand, may be set up for many functions: television viewing, entertaining, studying, and possibly even housing for overnight guests. So areas can vary in the degree to which they are designed to serve specific purposes. The ways that they vary thus partially characterize the areas.

3. BOUNDARIES:

An area can vary in how it is physically defined. Some areas are defined by physical boundaries. The room itself is an example. Even areas within rooms can be defined by physical boundaries. A play house in a classroom might serve as an example. Some areas may have no physical boundaries, but through habit, storage of materials,

seating facilities, etc., there is an understanding that it is an area. For example, a desk in the corner of the room may be considered as an area even though there are no walls around it.

4. MATERIALS:

An area can also vary in its relationship to the storage of materials. An area may contain materials and resources that are used there (as in the kitchen), or it may contain materials that are used somewhere else (for example, a supply room), or it may not have materials stored in it, in which case materials may be brought to the area. A large empty table in the classroom may be a place where materials are brought to be worked with.

5. WORKING FACILITIES:

Classroom areas are places where people go and do something and they can vary in terms of the kind of facilities they have to support what is done there. An area may have tables or desks with chairs, counters or tables to stand and work at, open floor space for sitting or lying down, comfortable cushions for lounging and relaxing, etc. In our daily lives, we're really very familiar with this notion. Consider barber chairs, work benches, easy chairs, beds, big tables, little tables, desks, couches, and so on.

These five issues (SIZE, FUNCTION, BOUNDARIES, MATERIALS, and WORKING FACILITIES) might be better called variables because any area can vary in how it relates to the five issues. For example, size is a variable because areas vary in their size. When you describe an area in terms of these variables, you have also defined the characteristics of the area.

By looking at these variables and considering the types of areas that would support Responsive Education, we arrived at the six primary areas. FORM A lists these areas and their characteristics. On the following pages, we have provided a more detailed description of these areas and their relationship to characteristics of activities and needs that occur in the classroom. For convenience, we have labeled these six areas as "Types A, B, ...F."

Rationale for and Description of Six Recommended Areas for a Responsive Classroom

Type A Area... "PRIVATE AREA"

What does a Type A area look like? -- A brief description

This is a small area just big enough for one or two children to go to be away from the ongoing activities of the class. The area is small and affords physical and visual isolation. There is no specific function (i.e., something the occupants should do) associated with the area and it does not contain working surfaces for sitting work. Further, materials are not stored in area.

Aside from the physical characteristics of the area, it is obvious that the area will not serve its purpose unless the teacher uses the area in its intended manner and establishes limits to assure such usage. That is, the teacher should not use it as a place to hold "problem children," or as a punishment area. Likewise, if the area is to serve as a refuge from the rest of the room, there need to be some rules or limits, such as: "Children in the private area are not to be disturbed." This rule might well apply to the teacher as well as to the children.

What is the reason for having a PRIVATE AREA in the classroom?

A classroom is a "foreign" environment for young children. This is as true for the young child as for a child of any age who is new to the particular classroom or its occupants. No matter how much energy a teacher uses to make the classroom warm and comfortable, it remains an institutional setting. As such, it is not similar to the familiar environment of the child's non-school life. Thus, it is desirable to provide children with a half-way area, a transitional area where they

can be physically within the classroom yet separated from its ongoing activities and functions. The private area is designed to serve this end. It provides a place where the child can "drop out" when psychological or social demands of the classroom become too great, or when privacy is desired.

What purpose does a Type A area serve?

A PRIVATE AREA can meet the needs of children who want to be alone for some of the following reasons:

- A child has suffered a mild emotional trauma, possibly arising from a confrontation with somebody or frustration from a difficult problem, and does not want to be left in the spotlight of other children's gazes or to cope with others' attempts to make him feel better.

- A child wants to be with a friend in a situation where they will not be disturbed by other children.

- A child wants to escape from the main activities of the classroom because it has become difficult for him to focus his attention.

- A child is beginning to explore a new problem and wants privacy so that others will not see his first groping mistakes or because he needs the privacy to concentrate.

Type B Area ... "INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING"

What does a Type B area look like? -- A brief description

The INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING is a fairly permanent working surface for sitting work that is large enough to accommodate comfortably one or two children. It is a "free area" that can be used by one or two children to pursue a number of types of activities. Since there is no specific function associated with this type of area, materials are generally not stored there. If they are, they are usable for a variety of functions and not restricted to specific functions. For example, the area may have paper and pencils as opposed to a range of materials used specifically for curricular activities like block play and mathematics. There may be one or many Type B areas, depending upon the size of the room, the number and age of the children, and the types of activities going on in the classroom. An individual desk is one example of a Type B area.

What is the reason for having a Type B area in the classroom?

Children should not always be expected to work with small or large groups of other children. There are many occasions when a child might want to work by himself or with one other child. The classroom should provide free areas (those which are not the property of any one child) where a child can pursue any activity requiring a working surface for sitting work.

What purpose does a Type B area serve?

A Type B area can be expected to meet your needs and those of the children when the classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities are ones that do not occur daily, or they are activities that you want only one or two children to be working on together.
- The activities are ones that do not require a variety of materials, or they are ones for which the appropriate materials can be easily transported to the area.
- The activities require a working surface for sitting work.

Type C Area ..."LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK"

What does a Type C area look like? -- A brief description

A Learning Center With Surfaces For Sitting Work is a partially enclosed area where a small group of children (between three and six) could sit at working surfaces and work on similar activities. The Type C area is set up, on a fairly permanent basis, to serve a specific set of activities. It is also an area where materials are used by the child and stored in such a way that children have free access to them. A Type C area has working surfaces for sitting work, such as tables and chairs, counters and benches, etc. There may be one or many such areas in a classroom, depending on the size of the room, the number and age of the children, and the types of activities in which the children regularly engage. A "manupulative math center" is an example of a Type C area.

What is the reason for having a Type C area in the classroom?

Responsive education is concerned with small-group learning activities and with providing an environment that can facilitate such activities. Children working together gain a variety of perspectives plus the possibility of wider insights and feedback from others. There is the opportunity for children to use each other as resources.

A Type C area allows you to set up a fairly permanent area for specific activities. This means that you can store materials in the same area where they will be used. Setting up a learning center also means that children know where to go to pursue certain activities; thus, they become more self-directing in their learning.

What purpose does a Type C area serve?

A Type C area can be expected to meet your needs when classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities are ones that some children can be expected to engage in every day.
- At any one time, you want only a small group to be mutually engaged in the activity.
- The activities are such that the children can be expected to use a variety of resources or materials that are freely available to them.
- The activities are ones that require stable working surfaces at which the children can sit.

Type D Area ---"LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK"

What does a Type D area look like? -- A brief description

A Type D area is basically the same as a Type C area except that it does not have working surfaces such as tables, etc., at which children are expected to sit while working -- although some such surfaces may be present. That is, the Type D area is a fairly permanent area (in existence for at least three weeks); it is set up for specific activities; child-accessible materials used in the activities are stored in the area; it is an area that can comfortably hold a small group of children (between three and six); and the activities are such that children can be expected to work standing up or on the floor. As with the Type C area, there may be one or many Type D areas within a classroom. A "reading center" is an example of a Type D area.

What purpose does a Type D area serve?

A Type D area serves the same functions as a Type C area. The only difference involves the kind of working arrangement required by the activities. In Type D areas, children are expected to pursue activities that are physically less restrictive than those where children would be sitting at a working surface.

Type E Area ..."GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA"

What does a Type E area look like? -- A brief description

A GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA is an area where a medium-sized group of children (between five and twelve) could work at a variety of activities that require a working surface for either standing or sitting work. It does not have a specific purpose and the materials used by the children are generally brought to the area by the children or teacher. Because of the size of the area, there is generally only one Type E area for a classroom serving 20 children. An example might be a couple of large tables with chairs located centrally in the room.

What is the reason for having a Type E area in the classroom?

This area provides the classroom with the possibility of meeting the needs for a small or large group of children who are involved in activities not specifically related to other classroom areas. In Responsive Education, many needs are not constant enough to require a permanent area, but they do occur and need to be met. This area serves that purpose.

What purpose does a Type E area serve?

A Type E area can meet your needs when you want classroom activities with the following characteristics:

- A medium-sized group of children working together at an activity that a learning center (Type C) has not been set up for.
- A number of activities that might not disturb each other going on at the same time in the same area.

- The materials used by the children can conveniently be brought to the area by the children or by you.

- The activities require off-the-floor working surfaces at which children can sit or stand.

Type F Area ..."LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA"

What does a Type F area look like? -- A brief description

The LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA is an area where most or all of the class can meet at the same time. Basically it is a large area, free of obstructing furniture, or with furniture that can easily be moved so that a large group of children could occupy the area by sitting on the floor. The area is not arranged for specific activities but can accommodate a wide range of activities that require a larger space. Materials used in the area are brought to it. There is only one such area in a classroom for 20 children. A large carpeted area free of furniture would be an example.

What is the reason for having a Type F area in the classroom?

A large-group area where most of the class can be gathered at the same time can serve many needs for both the teacher and the children. For example, many teachers like to start the day with a large-group meeting in which concerns and interests are discussed, roll-call is taken, assignments are made, etc. There are also times during the day when a large space can serve a few children who are engaged in an activity requiring a large space.

What purpose does a Type F area serve?

A Type F area can be expected to meet your needs when classroom activities have the following characteristics:

- The activities require a large amount of space or you want most

of the class to meet at the same time.

- The activities do not require working surfaces for sitting work or such surfaces can easily be brought to the area.
- The materials used in the activities can easily be brought to the area.

Number of Each of the Six Primary Areas Recommended for Your Classroom

Before leaving Chapter 1, we should consider how many of each of the six primary areas we would recommend for your classroom. There are no hard and fast rules in this matter. The closest thing to a principle is our belief that there should be about a third more working spaces than there are children. If you had only as many working spaces as children, then each child would have little freedom as to where he wanted to work; that is, he'd have to wait for someone else to move before he could change his location.

The following is a rough statement of what we would consider as the minimum number of areas for a classroom set up for 20 five-to-six-year-old children:

1 PRIVATE AREA (Type A)

2 INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREAS (Type B)

2 LEARNING CENTERS WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK (Type C)

2 LEARNING CENTERS WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK (Type D)

1 GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA (Type E)

1 LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA (Type F)

Of course, if the classroom had fewer or more than 20 children, these figures would change. The age of the children also plays a role. Younger children do not work as well in large groups and fewer of their activities require the use of tables and chairs. Younger children spend more time in play activity that is better carried out without desks, etc.

In Table 1 (page 31) we have provided some rough figures for each of the six primary area types. To use Table 1, use the average age of the children in the classroom to select one of the three rows for the area in question.

Go across this row until you come to the column for the number of children in your classroom. The figure in that square stands for the minimum number of that type of area that we would recommend for your classroom.

For example, looking at Table 1 you can see that if you had a classroom with 32 first graders (six years of age), you should have a minimum of 2 Private Areas, 3 Individual Areas, 3 Learning Centers with seating, 3 without, 2 General Activity Areas, 2 Large Group Areas.

TABLE 1

Minimum number of each of the six primary [illegible]s recommended for different-size classrooms for different-[illegible]d children.

Type A Area...PRIVATE AREA.

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2

Type B Area...INDIVIDUAL FREE WORK AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	3	4	4
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6

Type C Area...LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	0	1	1	2	3	3	4	5
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6

Type D Area...LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6
5-6 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5
7-8 yrs.	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	5

Type E Area...GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3

Type F Area...LARGE GROUP FREE AREA

Age of children	Number of children in classroom: 0-9	10-14	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-50	51+
3-4 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3
5-6 yrs.	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3
7-8 yrs.	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3

CHAPTER 2

LEARNING CENTERS

Introduction

This second chapter of the unit is really a continuation of the first. In Chapter 1, we discussed six types of classroom areas that we called "the six primary areas." Two of the areas discussed (Types C and D) were called "Learning Centers." The Type C Learning Center was characterized as having working surfaces, such as tables, for sitting work and the Type D Learning Center was characterized as an area where activities could be carried out in a number of ways, such as standing, sitting on the floor, or lounging in comfortable chairs. In this chapter we will look more closely at the characteristics of these two types of learning centers and some of the functions they can serve in the classroom.

Almost all of the classroom centers talked about in early childhood education are examples of our Type C and D Learning Centers. Centers such as the homemaking center, the art area, the reading center, the block-play area, etc. are typically arranged so that the children are free to work in many ways. They may be standing at art easels, playing with blocks on the floor, comfortably reading or being read to while relaxing on cushions, and so on. Because the children are not restricted to working while sitting at tables or similar working surfaces, we call these areas "Learning Centers Without Surfaces for Sitting Work" or Type D areas.

Math centers, writing centers, science centers, etc., are another set of classroom areas typically talked about by early childhood educators. Often these areas are arranged so that children can pursue their work while sitting and working at writing surfaces. We call these areas "Learning Centers with Surfaces for Sitting Work" or Type C areas.

Before going on in the unit, you should complete ACTIVITY II. This activity and its FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION are designed to acquaint you more thoroughly with the characteristics of the two types of learning centers. This activity should require no more than an hour of your time to complete. Before you begin ACTIVITY II, read through the OVERVIEW and the INSTRUCTIONS for the activity. After you have completed ACTIVITY II, read through the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY II which will bring you to the end of Chapter 2.

Overview of Activity II

As in the first chapter, this chapter is also structured around a classroom observation activity. In ACTIVITY I you looked at a classroom to determine whether each of the six primary areas was present. In Activity II, you will look more closely at learning centers.

ACTIVITY II consists of two parts that are very similar to the two parts in ACTIVITY I. First, you will take an evaluation instrument (FORM C, page 37) into a classroom and evaluate one area that you regard as a learning center. In the second part of the activity, you are asked to recommend, on FORM D, how the learning center would have to be changed in order for it to receive a high score on FORM C. Of course, if the learning center you evaluate already has a high score, then you do not need to do the second part of ACTIVITY II.

If possible, you should carry out ACTIVITY II in the same classroom you observed for ACTIVITY I. If this is not possible, choose another classroom for three- to eight-year-old children. Again, you do not have to visit the classroom while it is in operation, nor is it necessary that children or

adults be in the room while you are observing.

You will notice that five of the questions on FORM C correspond to the five issues we discussed in Chapter 1. They are questions about the size, function, boundaries, etc., of the area you are evaluating. After reading Chapter 2, you should be familiar with these characteristics. There are seven additional characteristics that we are using to define learning centes. ACTIVITY II will be your first introduction to these seven characteristics. As you go through Chapter 2, you will learn more about them and their relationship to the functioning of the classroom.

Instructions for Activity II

Part 1.

Once you have found a classroom you can observe, you are ready to begin ACTIVITY II. First, acquaint yourself with FORM C (page 37). You will use this form to evaluate the classroom.

Using FORM C is fairly simple. You just have to choose an area to evaluate and then answer each of the 12 questions on FORM C with a "YES" or "NO" answer. When you have done that, you can give the learning center a score by adding up the numbers that correspond to your "YES" and "NO" answers. If there are many learning centers in the classroom, it is suggested that you pick the one that will receive the highest score on FORM C. For example, if the classroom has an art center and a block corner, pick the one that would have the most "YES" answers to the 12 questions.

"YES" answers to the 12 questions are given either 1 or 2 points depending upon the importance of the issue to the general functioning of a learning center. In the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY II, we will discuss the 12 characteristics in more depth.

Part 2.

After you have answered the 12 questions for the center, you will need to determine whether you should do Part 2 of the activity. Base your decision on the total score on FORM C. If the center received a score of 16 or less out of the total possible 19 points, then do Part 2 of the activity by using FORM D (page 39). If the score on FORM C is higher than 16 points, go on to the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION.

If you are doing Part 2, you need to determine what changes would have to be made in the room to have a learning center that scores higher than 16 points.

a. If there is no area in the room that even comes close to being a learning center, then indicate on FORM D that you would change the classroom by including a learning center. Describe what the area would be used for and what it would look like.

b. If there is a learning center in the room, but it scored fewer than 16 points, describe on FORM D how you would change the center so that it would score more than 16 points.

Name: _____

FORM C — Evaluation of a Learning Center

(For use in classroom observation. See instructions on page 35.)

If there is a learning center in the classroom, briefly describe it in the box below:

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR THE LEARNING CENTER DESCRIBED ABOVE BY CIRCLING THE NUMERAL IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally enclosed by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES.)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children in the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

TO SCORE, SUM UP THE CIRCLED VALUES

Name: _____

FORM D — Recommended Changes for Learning Center

Evaluated in Activity II

(For use after completing FORM C. See instructions on page 36.)

If there are no learning centers in the classroom, or if the learning center evaluated on FORM C scored fewer than 16 points, describe what changes would have to be made in the room in order for there to be at least one learning center that scores more than 16 points.

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity II

Description and Rationale for the 12 Area Variables

At this point, it might be helpful if you return to our discussion of learning centers in Chapter 1. On pages 22-24 we gave a brief description of two types of learning centers, the reasons for having learning centers, and the kind of purpose or needs learning centers can serve.

As you will recall from our discussion in Chapter 1, we used five variables to characterize all classroom areas. These were: SIZE, FUNCTION, BOUNDARIES, MATERIALS, and WORKING FACILITIES. In this chapter, we have added to the list so that we now have 12 variables, most of which are an elaboration on the five previous ones.

From the basic variable of whether or not an area has materials stored in it, we have derived four additional variables: whether the materials are related to the purpose of the area; whether the materials are stored so that children can easily return them to their proper place; whether the materials are visually evident to the children; and whether the materials are physically available to the children.

From the basic question on the boundaries of an area, we have derived an additional two variables that can be used to describe an area: whether the boundaries provide visual privacy for children in the area; and whether the barriers eliminate traffic paths through the area.

One last issue, not discussed earlier, concerns whether or not an area displays products produced by the children working in the area.

The five original variables from Chapter 1, plus the four additional materials variables, plus the two additional boundaries variables, and the issue about products, give us a total of 12 variables. These are the ones

you used on FORM C to evaluate the area you observed. You may still be a little uncertain about how to judge an area in terms of these 12 variables, or exactly what we mean by them, or why we think they are important. In the following pages, we have provided a more detailed description of each variable and the reasons why we think each is important to the smooth functioning of a learning center.

1. WORKING FACILITIES: Does the area have working surfaces for sitting work?

   This question asks whether there are surfaces such as tables or counters at which children could sit and carry out their assignments or intentions.

   This is an important question. But whether the answer should be "yes" or "no" depends upon what you expect children to do in the area. If the learning center is set up for activities that require a smooth and stable working surface, then the answer should be "yes."

2. SIZE: What is the total number of children comfortably accommodated by the area?

   This question asks what total number of children could occupy a particular area at the same time and still function in terms of the purpose for which the area is being used.

   We feel that the number of children in an area is an important issue. In general, if a learning center is so small that only one or two children can occupy it at the same time, then too few children have access to the materials in the area or to the space itself. More than six children in the area would create interferences.

Another important point that relates to size concerns how you work with the children. If more than six children are in an area, it becomes harder for you to individualize your attention. On the other hand, if you are always dealing with only one or two children, you will not be able to give attention to as many children as you would with the same amount of time devoted to larger groups.

3. BOUNDARIES: Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?

This question refers to the manner in which an area is defined as being distinct from other areas in the room. Physical boundaries are those that cannot be walked through (e.g., room dividers, partitions, bookcases, etc.).

This issue is important because physical boundaries can help define the area, cut down on interference from other activities in the room, reduce noise, and give occupants a sense of some privacy in their work or play. Thus, learning centers should be at least partially defined by physical boundaries.

4. BOUNDARIES: Is the area isolated from visual contact?

This question refers to the possibility that the majority of children occupying the area could, if sitting on the floor, avoid visual contact with other areas. Most areas partially or totally defined by physical boundaries would meet this definition if the boundaries were solid.

This issue is important for the same reasons boundaries themselves are important. They reduce distraction between

activities and provide a sense of privacy.

5. BOUNDARIES: Is the area isolated from through traffic?

"Through traffic" means that there is a possibility of finding a path that leads from one area to another by going through the area. If such a possibility exists, the area is not isolated from through traffic. A tolerable exception may be a path going through an area but not in such a way that it would disturb the occupants.

Whether or not traffic paths go through an area is important for the same resons that boundaries themselves are important. If children are passing through an area where other children are working, they are more likely to be distracted from their work or play. Eliminating traffic through an area limits distractions.

6. MATERIALS: Are materials normally stored in the area?

This is one of the issues discussed in Chapter 1. It simply asks whether there are materials stored in the area. In this instance, we are concerned with materials that children use rather than materials that only you or other adults use.

Whether materials are stored in the area has many implications for the functioning of the area and of the classroom in general. If materials are stored in the area, then it means that children will be going into the area to get materials. This could cause disruption to others working or playing in the area. If the materials are stored in the area and used there as well, then disruption will be minimized. That's true not only because the users of the materials are also the same persons using the area, but also

because if materials are stored close to where they are used, then children do not have to go through other parts of the classroom to get or return them.(See item 11 below.)

7. MATERIALS: Are materials stored in such a way that children are able to return them to their proper place?

This question asks whether there are specific places for materials so that children can return them to their original sites. The question also involves determining whether the task of returning the materials is a reasonable one for the children to carry out. For example, if young children are always expected to put crayons back in the box so there is a complete set with one of each color in the set, it is unlikely that children will, in fact, return them to their original place (especially if more than one set of crayons is out at the same time).

If children are able to return materials to their proper place, then it is more likely that other children will know where to find what they are looking for. You know how difficult it is to work in your kitchen or shop if someone uses it but does not put things back where you're used to finding them. The same principle applies in the classroom as well.

8. MATERIALS: If materials are stored in the area, are they visually evident to the children?

This question asks whether the children can see most of the stored materials they are allowed to use. For example, if books

are stored in the area, are they on the shelves or are they in closed cupboards?

Storing materials so that the children can see them makes it much easier for them to find what they are looking for. An additional point is equally important. Often the child knows that he needs something, but is not sure what it is. If he sees what's available, he may be better able to find a way to satisfy his need. For example, let's say you are hungry and want a snack. You don't know what you want but you look in the refrigerator. There you see something appealing and you've got your snack. This kind of process accounts for a good portion of how we think and solve problems. The young child is even more dependent than the adult upon what he can directly see and experience.

9. MATERIALS: If materials are stored in the area, are they stored in such a way that they are physically available to the children?

Like the item above, this questions refers to instances in which materials are stored or normally found in the area. The question is whether the majority of these materials are physically available to the child. This means that materials are not in places requiring an adult to retrieve them (e.g., high shelves, locked cupboards), nor restricted by rules such as "Do not use without teacher permission."

A learning center cannot function as such unless children have access to materials. If they don't have this access, then they can do only what you or other adults consciously provide for, and not what their own creative processes suggest. Recall that we want to help children become decision-makers about what they will do, and how they will do it. This involves decisions about

what resources or materials to use.

10. FUNCTION: Does the area have a specific function that is evident to the children?

This question asks whether there are specific types of activities that are always done in the area and whether this idea is clear to the children. The function of an area may be made clear to children through a written or pictorial sign, through materials, through child products, or through habits and practices in the classroom.

The whole idea of a learning center is that it is a specific place set up for children to do specific things. Ideally, what is done there should share some common characteristics such as the materials used, the kind of working facilities that support the activity, and whether a small-group setting is the best place for the activity to occur. In general, if some areas in the room are set up for specific functions or activities, then children know what to do when they go there and they know where to go for specific activities as well as specific materials.

11. MATERIALS AND FUNCTION: Are materials related to the function of the area also stored in the area?

This question asks whether there are materials stored in the area that relate to the type of activities pursued in the area (e.g., if the area is a "math" area, are math materials also stored there?).

As we've already suggested, a learning center should have

materials that are used there. This cuts down on general traffic to and from storage areas and helps children find materials that help in their activities. (See item number six above).

12. PRODUCTS: Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area visually evident to the children working in the area?

This question concerns products from past activities in which children have been involved and whether such products are present and visually evident in the area.

This issue is important for two psychological reasons. First, if products that the children themselves have made are present in the area, their presence increases the children's sense of "belonging," "importance," and "pride" in the classroom. Secondly, past products can act as resources or sources for new ideas. Everything in the present grows out of the past and products are a record of the past. If children can interact with their own "record," that interaction will contribute to the richness of their activities in the present.

Relationship of Each of the Six Primary Areas to the 12 Area Variables

In the preceding pages, we have examined 12 issues or variables and their relationship to learning centers. We can also use these 12 variables to describe more thoroughly the four other types of primary areas.

Table 2 (page 50) shows the 12 variables and how each relates to the six primary areas. You will notice that some of the squares have "yes" and "no" in them or numbers representing the size of the area. Other squares are blank.

The blank spaces indicate that the variable is not critical to the description of the area. Table 2 is basically a summary of the information covered in Chapters 1 and 2.

TABLE 2

Using 12 variables to describe the six primary areas

Area Variables	Area Types: Private Type A	Individual Type B	Learning Center Type C	Learning Center Type D	Free Area Type E	Large Group Type F
1. There are working surfaces for sitting work.	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. What is the number of children in the area?	1-2	1-2	3-6	3-6	5-12	13-20
3. The area is partially defined by physical boundaries.	Yes		Yes	Yes		
4. The area is visually isolated from other areas.	Yes		Yes	Yes		
5. The area is isolated to through traffic.	Yes		Yes	Yes		
6. Materials are normally stored in the area.	No		Yes	Yes		
7. Materials can be easily returned by the children.			Yes	Yes		
8. Materials are visually evident.			Yes	Yes		
9. Materials are physically available.			Yes	Yes		
10. There is a specific function.	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
11. Materials related to the functions are stored in the area.	No		Yes	Yes		
12. Child products are visually evident in the area.			Yes	Yes		

CHAPTER 3

CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT AND CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Introduction

Throughout the last two chapters we made the assumption that classroom areas and activities or behavior can be described by using variables that characterize areas and activities. So far, our attention has been focused more on describing areas than on activities. But each of the area variables (for example, the way materials are stored) has some relationship to activities (such as the way materials are retrieved).

In this chapter, we will explore some variables that define activities and discuss how these "activity variables" can be matched with "area variables," and how, if a proper match is achieved, you stand a better chance of getting the kind of behavior that you expect from children. The same holds for behavior that you don't want. By giving attention to how the classroom is organized, you can eliminate undesirable behavior as well as encouraging desirable behavior.

When educators talk about classroom activity, they most often mean "curricular activity" such as reading, writing, arithmetic, art, block-play, etc. The use of these "subject matter" terms for describing activities doesn't give us a very accurate picture of what children are actually doing. Nor does it give us very much information about how we would arrange an area to support such activities. About all such terms tell us is what kind of materials might be involved in the activity; for example, books for reading, blocks for block-play, and so on. We are going to use a more descriptive way of talking about classroom activities. When we talk about activities, we will refer to actual child-adult behaviors and work-play situations.

Before reading further in the unit, you should do ACTIVITY III. This activity and the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION are designed to focus your classroom observation on child behaviors and work-play situations in the classroom. In the FOLLOW-UP, we will relate these behaviors and situations to characteristics of areas, and provide you with a simple decision-making process that can help you match the six primary areas with desired behavior.

It will take at least one hour of classroom observation time for you to complete ACTIVITY III. Before you actually begin your observation, make sure you are clear about what you will do and how you will do it. Below we have provided an overview of ACTIVITY III and instructions. Read these carefully and then conduct the classroom observation. After you have finished ACTIVITY III, read the FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TO ACTIVITY III.

Overview of Activity III

ACTIVITY III consists of two parts. In the first part, you will use an observation form (FORM E, pp. 55-56) to observe the behavior and work-play situations of six (6) children. In Part 2 of the activity, you will interview the classroom teacher. If you work in the classroom you are observing, then you may be able to answer the questions yourself. FORM F (page 57) provides the interview questions. Allow at least an hour for ACTIVITY III.

The questions asked on FORMS E and F do not represent all of the information you might need to match the classroom arrangement to the activities and working situations that you desire. ACTIVITY III, with its FORMS E and F, is simply an introduction to some basic considerations.

Since it is best that you observe a classroom you are familiar with, you should observe the same classroom you used for ACTIVITY I and II. However, if you feel that another classroom is more familiar to you, you should use that one.

Instructions for Activity III

Part 1. There are a number of decisions you have to make before you begin Part 1. First, you have to select the classroom you are going to observe and then you have to decide when you are going to observe. Since ACTIVITY III involves observing children, you need to observe when the classroom is in operation. Furthermore, since you will be observing to learn about classroom activities, you should choose an observation time when it is most likely that many different activities will be going on in the room. Select a time when you believe (either through your own familiarity with the classroom schedule or through information the teacher gives you) that the children are likely to be doing a number of different activities.

When you are doing the observation, you will have to decide which children to observe. Start with any child in the classroom and observe him or her for approximately five minutes. While you are observing, answer the questions on FORM E. You may not be able to answer all the questions.

After you have answered all the questions you can for the first child, select a second child who is not directly involved or interacting with the first child. When you have answered the questions on FORM E for the second child, select a third child who is not interacting with the second child. Continue in this way until you have observed a total of six children.

You will notice that some of the questions on FORM E can be answered by circling one of the possible answers. In other cases, you will have to provide your own words to answer the question. Furthermore, some of the questions on FORM E depend upon how you answered the previous question.

For example, if the child you are observing is working alone, you cannot answer questions 1b and 1c because they ask about the group the child is working or playing with.

Part 2. In the second part of ACTIVITY III, you are asked to answer some general questions about the classroom. FORM F provides the questions. They can be answered by circling one of the alternatives, or if the alternatives are not adequate, you may write in the answer in your own words. To answer the questions, you may need to interview the teacher (or possibly the children) unless you are familiar enough with the classroom to answer the questions on your own.

Before you complete FORM F, you need to make sure that you understand the intent of the questions. So far, we haven't said anything about the questions themselves. If, after you've looked them over, they still seem confusing, read pages 58-61 of FOLLOW-UP which should clear up any confusion.

Name: _____

FORM E — Observing Activities of Six Children

(For use in classroom observation. See instructions on page 52.)

IF POSSIBLE, ANSWER EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR EACH CHILD OBSERVED. WHEN INDICATED, ANSWER BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE CHOICE. OBSERVE EACH CHILD FOR APPROXIMATELY FIVE MINUTES.

		CHILD 1	CHILD 2	CHILD 3
1a.	Is child alone or part of a group? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	ALONE GROUP	ALONE GROUP	ALONE GROUP
1b.	If in a group, how many children are in the group? (ANSWER WITH A NUMERAL)			
1c.	If in a group, is child interacting with other children? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
2a.	Is child sitting or standing? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	SITTING STANDING	SITTING STANDING	SITTING STANDING
2b.	Describe what child is sitting or standing on. (USE OWN WORDS)			
2c.	Is child working at a table or counter? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
3a.	Is child touching or interacting with classroom materials? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
3b.	If so, describe the materials being used. (USE OWN WORDS)			
3c.	If so, did child get materials on his own or did someone else give materials to child? (USE OWN WORDS)			
3d.	If so, how far away is one of the objects normally stored? (INDICATE APPROXIMATE DISTANCE IN FEET)			

Name: _____

		CHILD 4	CHILD 5	CHILD 6
1a.	Is child alone or part of a group? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	ALONE GROUP	ALONE GROUP	ALONE GROUP
1b.	If in a group, how many children are in the group? (ANSWER WITH A NUMERAL)			
1c.	If in a group, is child interacting with other children? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
2a.	Is child sitting or standing? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	SITTING STANDING	SITTING STANDING	SITTING STANDING
2b.	Describe what child is sitting or standing on. (USE OWN WORDS)			
2c.	Is child working at a table or counter? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
3a.	Is child touching or interacting with classroom materials? (CIRCLE ONE CHOICE)	YES NO	YES NO	YES NO
3b.	If so, describe the materials being used. (USE OWN WORDS)			
3c.	If so, did child get materials on his own or did someone else give materials to child? (USE OWN WORDS)			
3d.	If so, how far away is one of the objects normally stored? (INDICATE APPROXIMATE DISTANCE IN FEET)			

Name: _____

FORM F — Interview Questions Regarding the General Functioning of the Classroom

(For use as a teacher interview or to fill out yourself if you are familiar with the daily operation of the classroom. See page 52 for instructions.)

ANSWER EACH OF THE QUESTIONS BELOW BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE CHOICE OR BY USING YOUR OWN WORDS.

1. Are there any classroom activities (such as reading, writing, arithmetic, block-play, etc.) that generally occur every day?

   YES

   NO

   If "YES", are any of these activities also ones that are likely to occur a number of times during the day?

   YES

   NO

2. If you were to take a photograph of your total classroom at any time during the day, how likely is it that many different kinds of activities would be going on?

   NOT VERY LIKELY FAIRLY LIKELY VERY LIKELY

3. If you were to take a photograph of your total classroom at any time during the day, how likely is it that children would be working or playing in a variety of social situations, such as by themselves, with an adult, in a small group, in a large group, etc.?

   NOT VERY LIKELY FAIRLY LIKELY VERY LIKELY

4. To what extent are children free to get their own classroom materials?

   ADULTS DISTRIBUTE ALL OF THE MATERIALS TO THE CHILDREN.

   CHILDREN HAVE FREE ACCESS TO SOME OF THE MATERIALS BUT MOST ARE DISTRIBUTED BY ADULTS

   CHILDREN ARE FREE TO GET THEIR OWN MATERIALS

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity III

In the previous two chapters, our discussion has often touched upon the relationship of classroom activities to each of the six primary areas. A brief review of this material is provided in Chapter 1 (pages 18-28) where we looked at the purpose that each of the areas might serve. It might be helpful at this time if you review these pages.

How to Evaluate the Information Gathered in Activity III

The questions you answered on FORMS E and F represent only some of the important issues you might consider in arranging or organizing your classroom. Furthermore, observing six children may not give you an accurate picture of how the questions would be answered for the other children in your classroom. However, even with these limitations, FORMS E and F give us a basis to start talking about what goes on in your classroom, whether you are satisfied with what you find, and how you can match the six primary areas to your own expectations.

The first issue to consider is the diversity or variety of work-play situations and child behavior. If there is diversity of activity in your classroom, then there should probably also be a variety of work-play spaces. One way to examine a classroom for diversity is to see whether each question on FORM E is answered in the same way for each child.

The first three questions on FORM E ask about the social situation the six children are working in. Are all the children working in a group, or are all working individually, or is there variation? If some are working in a group, are all the groups of the same size, or does the size of the group vary? If there are groups, do the children within the groups

interact (e. g., talk) or are the groups made up of individual children who are situated close to each other, but not working or playing together or using each other as resources?

You may find that there is very little variation in the social situation and behavior of the children, and might not be interested in arranging the classroom to support more. On the other hand, if you do find little variation, you might like to change the functioning of the classroom so that there would be a variety of social situations. If you want to support diversity in social situations and behavior, then you need to plan for it. The six primary areas provide a first step in supporting this diversity

The next three questions on FORM E (2a and 2b) ask about the working facilities in the classroom. Are most of the children sitting down or standing up or is there variation? Of those who are sitting, are most of them sitting on the same kind of furniture or on various things such as the floor, pillows, chairs, etc? The same question can be asked for standing. Are most standing on carpeted floors, wood floors, platforms, etc? Again, the decisions for you to make are whether you do or do not want diversity, and whether your classroom is accordingly arranged.

The remaining four questions on FORM E (3a through 3d) can also indicate classroom diversity. Are most of the children using classroom materials? Are most of those who are using materials using the same or similar materials--such as books or pencils and paper? Do most children using materials get them on their own or do others give the materials to the children? Answers to these questions tell us something about the classroom and its operation. You may accept the way the classroom presently

functions; in that case you need to ask whether it is optimally arranged to suit its function. For example, if most of the children get their own materials, but many have to travel across the room to get them, you might reorganize to cut down traffic. On the other hand, you may want to change the functioning of the classroom. For example, you may find that few of the children get materials on their own, which means that someone else has to do the carrying and distributing. You might want to change this situation; that will probably require changing the organization of the materials as well.

We can use FORMS E and F to look at other issues besides diversity. The way each question is answered, or how you would ideally like each question answered, also has implications for the physical arrangement of the classroom. For example, the size of groups in which you want children to work will have some influence on the size of areas. Likewise, if you allow or encourage children to work and talk with each other, then you need to consider how to keep the noise level down. Arrangement can be used to handle noise just as well as classroom rules and limits can.

One of the questions on FORM F relates to a decision about learning centers and whether they would be useful in the classroom. If there are certain curricular or play activities that occur fairly often, both during the day and during the week, then a learning center for those activities may be useful. For example, rather than having reading activities only at one time during the day, you could have a small-group reading center open throughout each day. That way, small groups of children could keep the area in constant use. If many different activities are evident or

desirable throughout the day, then maybe a number of learning centers might be called for.

As you can see, the types of questions asked on FORMS E and F help you determine the best ways to organize the classroom. However, before you can make organizational decisions, you need to determine whether what you see is what you want--whether it seems desirable for children as learners and for you as a facilitator of learning. Once you know how you want the classroom to function, you can make decisions about its organization and physical arrangement.

Issues That Should Be Considered in Setting up an Area to Suit Activities

In the following pages we have listed a number of considerations that review our discussion so far.

THE PERMANENCE OF AN AREA

- Should an area be set up permanently (at least for three weeks) for certain types of activities?
  - * How often does the activity occur?
  - * How many children would participate at one time?
  - * Are there certain materials that would be used only in this area?
  - * Would the activity be easier to carry out if there were a specific place for both the activity and the associated materials?

THE SIZE OF AN AREA

- How many children would you expect to participate mutually in the activity at any one time?
  - * How would children work together to enhance each other's activity?
  - * Would the activity be hindered by many or few children participating together?
  - * To what extent would large groups of children working together be disturbing others in the classroom?
  - * How many children in the classroom might be interested in the activity at the same time?
  - * Are there enough materials to support a group of children working together on the activity?
- How much room would the activity require?

THE BOUNDARIES OF AN AREA

- To what extent would the activity interfere wiht other activities in the classroom?
- Would children be more comfortable if they were visually isolated from others - so that others do not become "sidewalk superintendents" or so that others are not visually distracted from their own activities?
- Is the activity frequent enough to justify a permanent area in the classroom?
- Would boundaries help limit the number of children coming into the area?

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MATERIALS TO ACTIVITIES

- What resources or materials would children use in the activity?
- Should you put out the materials or let the children select them from storage?
  - * Would it make your job easier to select the materials or to have children select them?
  - * Would it benefit children if they selected materials by themselves?
  - * If children select their own materials, are these stored in a way that children can conveniently locate and retrieve the materials?
- Are children responsible for returning materials to a storage area?
  - * Would it make your job easier if children had this responsibility?
  - * Would it benefit children to be responsible for returning materials?
  - * If the materials are returned by the children, does the storage arrangement make returning easier?

THE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN AREAS

- Would the activity be easier to carry out if there were tables or counters to work at?
  - * Would the activity be easier if children could stand and work at a surface?

* Would being able to sit at tables or counters help or hinder the activity?

- Would children be more comfortable if they could work on the floor?

  * If children are working on the floor, is some comfort such as cushions or carpets provided?

A Decision-Making Process for Selecting the Six Primary Areas for Your Classroom

The following pages suggest some issues to consider and offer a decision-making process to help you match the primary areas with your classroom activities. Keep in mind that there could, and probably should, be more than one of the Type B, C, and D classroom areas within a classroom.* Also, as we will discuss in Chapter 5, there are many ways in which the six primary areas could be altered to meet specific needs.

For each of the following questions, read the statements under it and select the one that applies. Then read the decision process.

SHOULD THERE BE A LEARNING CENTER--AN AREA SPECIFICALLY SET UP ON A FAIRLY PERMANENT BASIS FOR THE ACTIVITY?

COMMENT: Remember that if children have a reasonably stable and permanent area where they know how to work and what to work on, the demands on you can be reduced since you won't have to constantly direct children to activities.

-continued-

* See pages 18-28 for a list of area Types A . . . . . F.

Such an environment can also help children become more self-directed in their activities.

WHICH STATEMENT APPLIES TO THE ACTIVITIES?

a. The activity occurs frequently enough to justify a permanent area in the classroom.

b. The children engage in the activity only one or two times a week or only a small portion of each day.

DECISION: If the "a" statement fits, then the area should probably be a Learning Center (Type C or D) and have resources stored there in such a way that children have free access to them. If the "b" statement fits, then maybe the area ought to be an area such as a Type A, B, E, or F.

HOW LARGE SHOULD THE AREA BE?

COMMENT: Remember that controlling the size of the area can accomplish many purposes. It can regulate the number of children interacting with each other and thus reduce classroom disturbance. It can regulate the demands on resources or supplies as well as provide for social interaction that is not disruptive. The size of an area can also provide for privacy in the classroom and a chance for children to be by themselves.

CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION

This question about the size of an area can be answered by considering both the amount of space required by the activity and the number of children you want to be mutually engaged in the activity.

DECISION:

a. If the activity does not require a lot of space and you want only one or two children working together--or one child working with you, then it should be an "individual area" (possibly a Type B area).

b. If the activity requires a moderate amount of room or if you want a small group of children to be mutually engaged in the activity, then a Learning Center or a small group area should be considered (possibly a Type C or D).

c. If the activity requires a large amount of space or if you want a medium-large group of children to work together, then make a General Classroom Activity Area or a Large Group Free Area should be considered.

SHOULD THE AREA HAVE WORKING SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK?

COMMENT: By providing appropriate working arrangements, you can help children be more comfortable and successful in their activities. Comfort is an important consideration

-continued-

in the extent to which young children will be happy in pursuing an activity. Success will also be partially determined by whether children can pursue the activity under appropriate conditions. Working arrangements also help determine the physical limits of the area in terms of the amount of space devoted to the area and the number of children who can work in the area.

WHICH STATEMENT APPLIES TO THE ACTIVITY?

a. The activities are easier or more comfortable to pursue if the children can sit at a table or counter.

b. The activities are easier or more comfortable to pursue if the children can sit on the floor, couches, pillows, etc., or stand up at a counter, table, easel, etc.

DECISION: If the "a" statement applies, then areas with seating, (Types B, C, or E) may be appropriate. If statement "b" applies, then those without working surfaces, (Types A, D, and F) may be appropriate. (There are probably circumstances where you might want a combination of working surfaces for sitting work and space for standing or sitting on the floor.)

By answering each of these questions, you should be able to determine which kind of area is best suited to a particular activity. However, it is possible that, by answering one question, you would choose, for example, a Type B area, but by answering another question, you would select

a Type C area for the same activity. Now, which area is the appropriate one? You will have to decide that issue by weighing the pros and cons and by looking at how all these areas fit together into a total classroom.

A List of Typical Early Childhood Activities

Many of the classroom behaviors of children are related to types of curricular activity or learning programs. For example, reading is a type of curricular activity and it seems fairly clear that certain actions such as looking at print, turning pages, getting books and so on, will be involved. However, to decide which actions are going to occur and which classroom area types are best suited, you must consider more than the fact that reading will occur. Is the reader learning to read or reading to learn? Will the reader read to others or be read to, or both? Is the reader simply translating sounds into words or words into meaning, or both? And which senses are used? Are eyes and ears being used at the same time or separately? Are other senses such as taste, feeling, movement, associated with the reading?

To say that a child is involved in art is another example of a statement that can have many meanings. Not only are there many forms and types of art, using a wide variety of materials, but there are also many ways of describing the behavior of the artist. Art may be working with art materials, or producing something called art, or something not called art, or doing something with hands, or feet, or simply thinking about the next "creative move."

To determine which types of area actually suits the activity it must support, you must consider very closely the nature of what the child or children will actually do. In the simplest sense this means that if you dance

the polka, you push the chairs further back than if you're dancing cheek to cheek--even though both are called "dancing."

We can give some sense of the rich variation found in child behaviors by listing some of the broad types of typical classroom activities. Keep in mind that activities are also done by someone (with or without someone else), with something, for some purpose, and in some space. Thus, underlying the following list are many implications for types of classroom materials, their storage and location, types of space and types of facilities.

ACTIVITIES	SOME EXAMPLES
ART	brush painting, finger painting, collage making, drawing, coloring.
BLOCKS	small and large-scale building, playing with toys.
COOKING	measuring, pouring, washing, cutting, frying, mixing, tasting-eating.
CRAFTS	cutting, tracing, gluing, drawing, painting, building, modeling, molding.
DANCE	individual dancing, large-group dancing, imitational dancing, orchestrated movements.
DRAMATIC PLAY	drama, toy play, puppet play, dress-up, role-playing.
LARGE-MUSCLE	dance, balancing, tumbling, games of movement.
LISTENING	listening to records, tapes/television, radio.

MANIPULATIVES	completing puzzles, playing with small blocks, playing board games, comparing, measuring.
MATHEMATICS	writing numbers, calculating, manipulating counters and unit blocks, ordering elements, classifying, measuring, weighing.
MUSIC	listening, playing instruments, individial or group singing, clapping.
READING	being read to, reading alone, reading to others, looking at pictures, pleasure reading, curricular reading.
RESTING	individual rest, large-group rest.
SCIENCE	growing and caring for plants and animals, collecting, observing, experimenting.
SHARING	listening, commenting, presenting, storytelling.
WATER AND SAND PLAY	pouring, measuring, playing, constructing.
WOODWORKING	cutting, sawing, nailing, measuring, sanding, painting.
WRITING	copying, writing stories, giving or taking dictation, making personal books, typing.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING THE CLASSROOM WORK FOR YOU: AN IMAGINARY CASE STUDY

Introduction

In many respects, Chapter 4 is a continuation of Chapter 3 where we discussed the general issue of classroom behavior and its relationship to the organization of the classroom. In Chapter 4, we take this issue a step further. Here we look at some examples of specific curricular activities and the ways two imaginary teachers arranged their classroom to suit these activities.

As you have already learned, when you arrange areas for an activity, you need to consider what kinds of child and adult behaviors you want to support and what kinds you want to eliminate. Our two imaginary teachers (Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones) have likewise considered how they want their classroom to operate and have arranged their room to eliminate undesirable behavior or avoid certain problems and to promote desired behavior. In this chapter, you will be sharing some of Ms. Smith's and Ms. Jones' concerns and then, by looking at illustrations of their classroom, trying to see if you can determine what they did in order to achieve the results they were looking for. We will say more about this in a moment.

Chapter 4 is written with three thoughts in mind. First, by using a classroom as an illustrative example (even though it is an imaginary one), you will have a better idea of what each of the six primary areas can look like when set up for specific activities. Second, you will be introduced to a number of practical concerns about behavior associated with classroom activities. In this case, we will look only at five activities but they will serve as examples of some general concerns. Third, by considering

both the concerns of our two teachers and the ways they arranged their room, you will be introduced to a number of principles or techniques for bringing about desired behavior or solving certain classroom management problems such as: the distribution of materials, having children return materials to their proper place, maintaining the desired number of children within areas, maintaining a tolerable noise level, reducing disruptive traffic, and eliminating general causes of classroom distractions.

This chapter is organized quite differently from the previous three; therefore, an overview seems in order. In the earlier chapters there was a brief introduction, a classroom observation activity, and a follow-up discussion. In this chapter, there are a number of short "thinking activities" that will not require field observation. After each activity there will be a short "follow-up" giving our suggested answers to the problems you thought about in the activity. At the end of these seven "mini-activities," there is a final short follow-up that summarizes the main points of the mini-activities.

Overview of Activities IV-A Through IV-G

Each of the seven activities in this chapter (IV-A through IV-G) is organized into four parts. The first part is a statement by Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith that describes the activity they want to set up and their concerns for behavior associated with the activity. The second part is an illustration of what Jones and Smith actually did. The illustration is accompanied by a written description. The third part is a list of questions that you should answer. You can use the illustration and written description plus your own knowledge when you answer the question. The

fourth part is the follow-up that provides the answers we would give to the questions. In general, it will take approximately an hour and a half to two hours to complete the seven activities.

Instructions for Activities IV-A Through IV-G

After reading the background information, begin with ACTIVITY IV-A below. Your task will be to read about what Ms. Smith and Jones want to accomplish, look at the illustration and read the description of the area, and then answer the questions. After answering the questions on your own, you may look at our answers found in the FOLLOW-UP TO ACTIVITY IV-A. Then go on to ACTIVITY IV-B and continue the same cycle until you reach the end of the chapter.

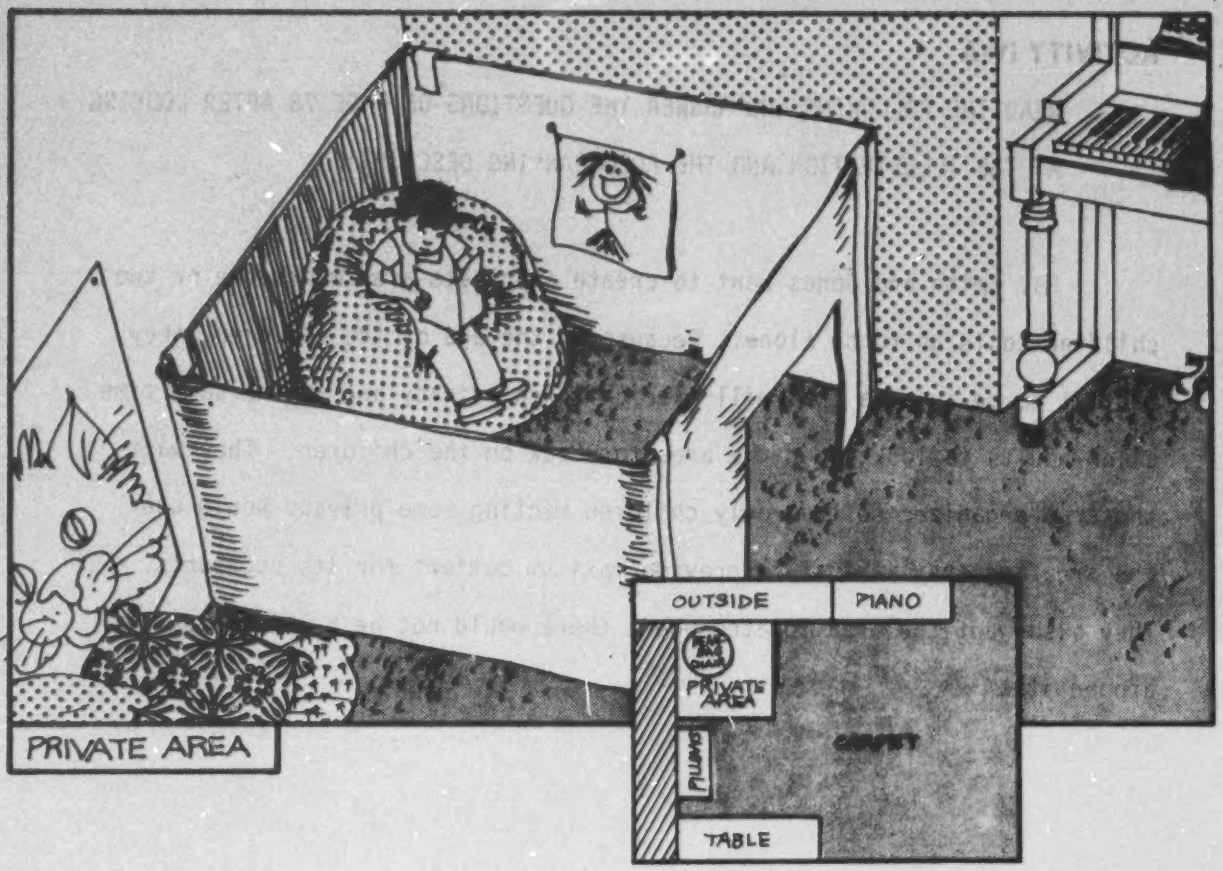
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Here's a little information on the two teachers. Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith work together in a classroom of 20 preschool children. This is the first "school" experience for these children. The teachers work with two classes of children each day: one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Both classes last for two and a half hours. There is very limited outdoor area for the children to play in, so the children spend all of their class period indoors except on special occasions.

ACTIVITY IV-A

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 78 AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Ms. Smith and Jones want to create a private area where one or two children could go to be alone. Because of the age of the children, they want it to be an area that will give children privacy and at the same time allow adults to look in on the area to check on the children. They want the area organized so that only children wanting some privacy would use the area and they want it to provide maximum comfort for its occupants. They also want the area located where there would not be a lot of traffic around it.



Description of the Area

Ms. Smith and Jones used a large cardboard box located in a corner of the room. They made the box so that its walls are four feet high and so that its top is open. They put a large pillow inside and carpeted the floor with extra-thick carpeting.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. What did teachers do to limit the number of children using the area to one or two?

2. What did the teachers do to make it a private area for children and at the same time allow adults to look in on the area?

3. How did the teachers restrict the use of the area to only those children wanting some privacy?

4. How did the teachers isolate the area from classroom traffic?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-A

1. What did the teachers do to limit the number of children using the area to one or two?

   They made the area small enough so that no more than one or two children would be comfortable in the area. (They might also tell the children that a classroom rule was that no more than two children could use the area at one time).

2. What did the teachers do to make it a private area for children and at the same time allow adults to look in on the area?

   They constructed the area with four-foot walls so that children could not look over the walls but adults could. They also placed the entrance to the area facing into the room so that it was fairly easy to look through the door to see into the area.

3. How did the teachers restrict the use of the area to only those children wanting some privacy?

   They did not put working facilities such as tables or chairs in the area and they made a decision not to have any classroom materials normally stored in the area so that other children would not need to enter the area to get supplies.

4. How did the teachers isolate the area from classroom traffic?

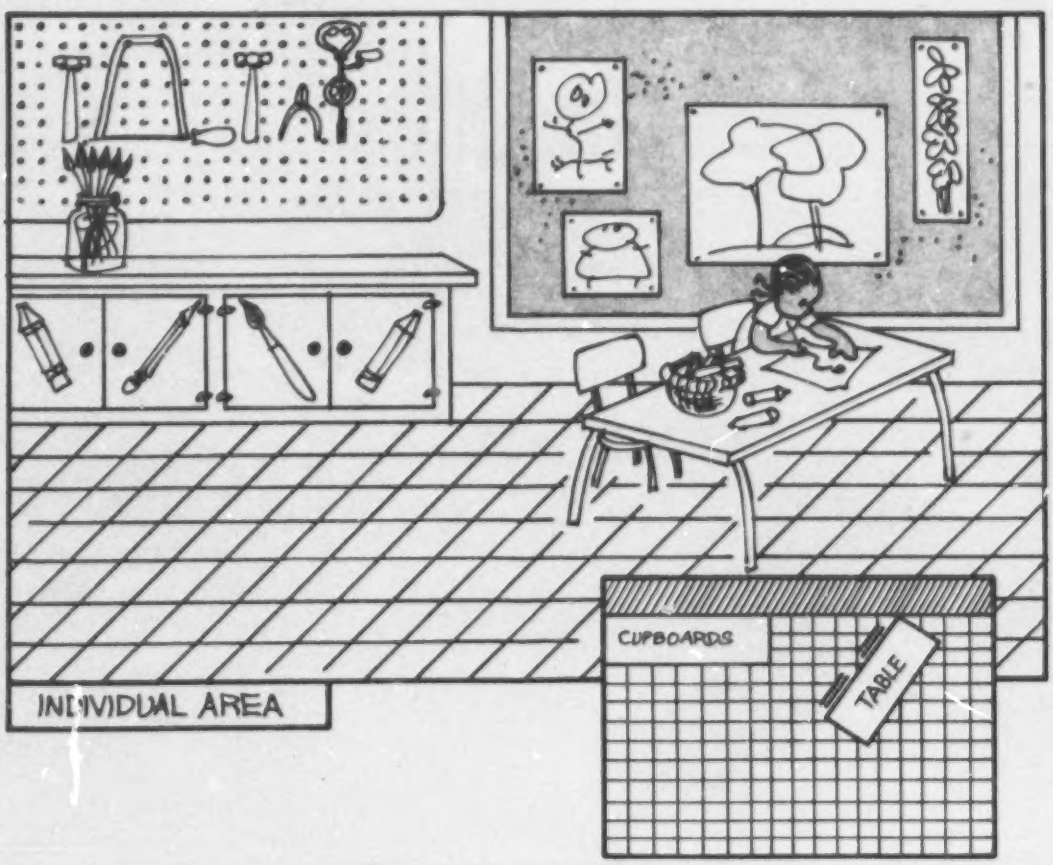
   By putting the area in a corner of the room away from the main traffic flow.

Activity IV-B

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 83 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith want a number of individual areas in the classroom where one or two children can sit and work at tables. They want the areas arranged so that children working in these areas will not be disrupted by classroom traffic. They want the areas to be available for a variety of activities.

Illustration for ACTIVITY IV-B



Description of the Area

One of the individual areas was created with a single table and two chairs located on a tiled portion of the classroom. The table comes out at an angle from the wall and the two chairs are positioned between the wall and the table. The table is not set up for any specific types of activities but rather is simply present to meet the needs of one or two children who need a table to work at.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How does the arrangement of the area limit the number of children using it?

2. How are children using the area protected from disruptive traffic?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-B

1. How does the arrangement of the area limit the number of children using it?

   The area has seating for only two children. The children have also been told that no more than two children are supposed to work at the table.

2. How are children using the area protected from disruptive traffic?

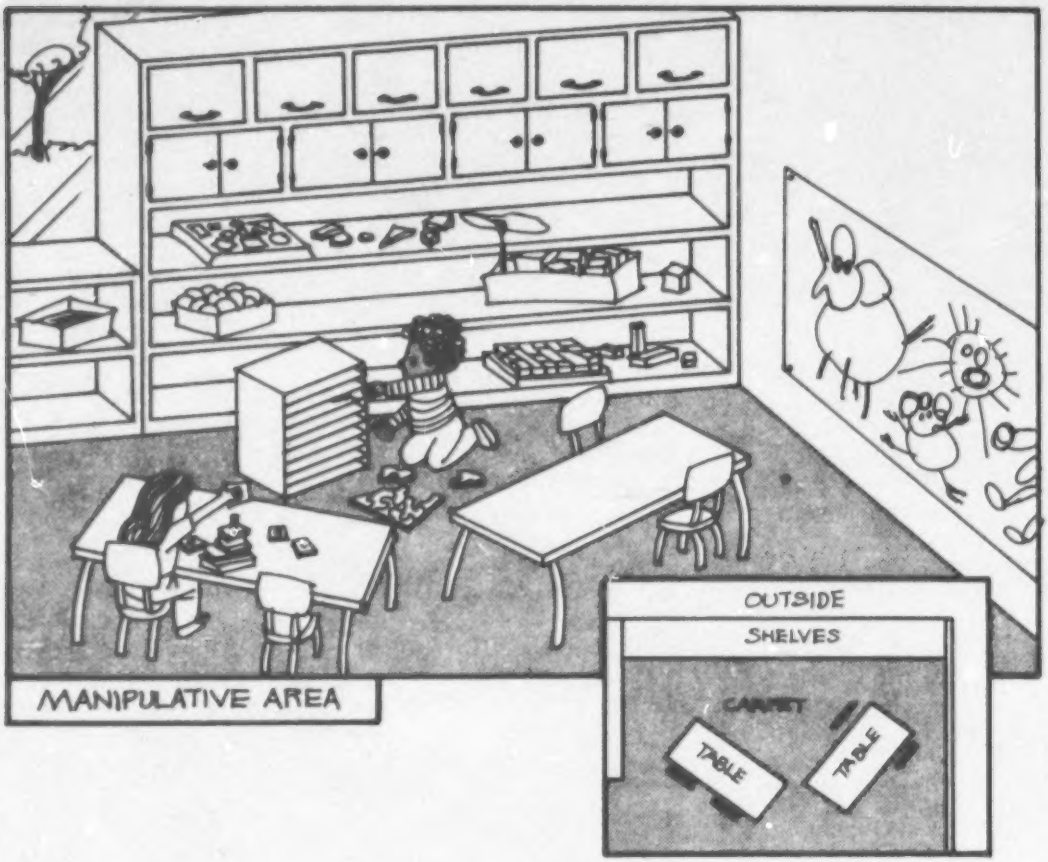
   The table comes out from the wall at an angle, creating an isolated sitting area between the table and the wall. In addition, the table is in an area that is not part of other classroom areas.

Activity IV-C

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 87 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Ms. Smith and Jones would like a permanent area where a small number of children could work with manipulatives. They want a working surface for sitting work since many of the materials will be easier to handle on a solid surface at sitting height. They also want the children to be able to play on the floor yet close enough so that the materials need not be transported across the room. They want the area to be such that there is not a great deal of traffic going through the area, and such that the noise associated with manipulatives will not distract others. Since most of the manipulatives can be used by children on their own, they want the materials to be accessible (physically and visually) to the children and arranged so that children can put materials back where they belong. They also want the accessible materials to change during the course of the year.

Illustration for ACTIVITY IV-C



Description of the Area

Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones used a carpeted corner of the classroom to set up an area for manipulatives. Along the wall there are low shelves on which materials are placed. There is closed storage space above the shelves. Two child-height tables, at angles to each other, serve to enclose a center space where children can play on the floor.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How did the teachers arrange for play on the floor and still have working surfaces for sitting-work in the area?

2. How is the area arranged to eliminate or reduce traffic through the area?

3. How have the teachers reduced the noise made in the area or made it less disturbing to others in the classroom?

4. How are materials stored in the area so that children can find what they need and put items back where they came from?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-C

1. How did the teachers arrange for play on the floor and still have work surfaces for sitting work in the area?

   Two child-height tables provide solid working surfaces at which children can either sit or stand. The two tables are arranged so that they enclose an area which is boarded on one side by the storage cabinet. This enclosed space allows children to play on the floor without being exposed to classroom traffic. The floor is carpeted so that children can be comfortable while playing on the floor.

2. How is the area arranged to eliminate or reduce traffic through the area?

   When the area is placed in a corner of the room, traffic has already been reduced. Although the children sitting at the tables are not completely protected from classroom traffic, they are not exposed to the main traffic paths. The children playing on the floor in the center of the area are protected from all traffic except when other children go to the materials. But even this traffic has been reduced by having some of the children sit along the edge of the tables; thus their route to the materials does not go through the center of the area.

3. How have the teachers reduced the noise made in the area or made it less disturbing to others in the classroom?

   Noise has been reduced by putting carpet on the floor and by

making the area small enough so that a large group of children is unlikely to collect there.

4. How are materials stored in the area so that children can find what they need and put items back where they came from?

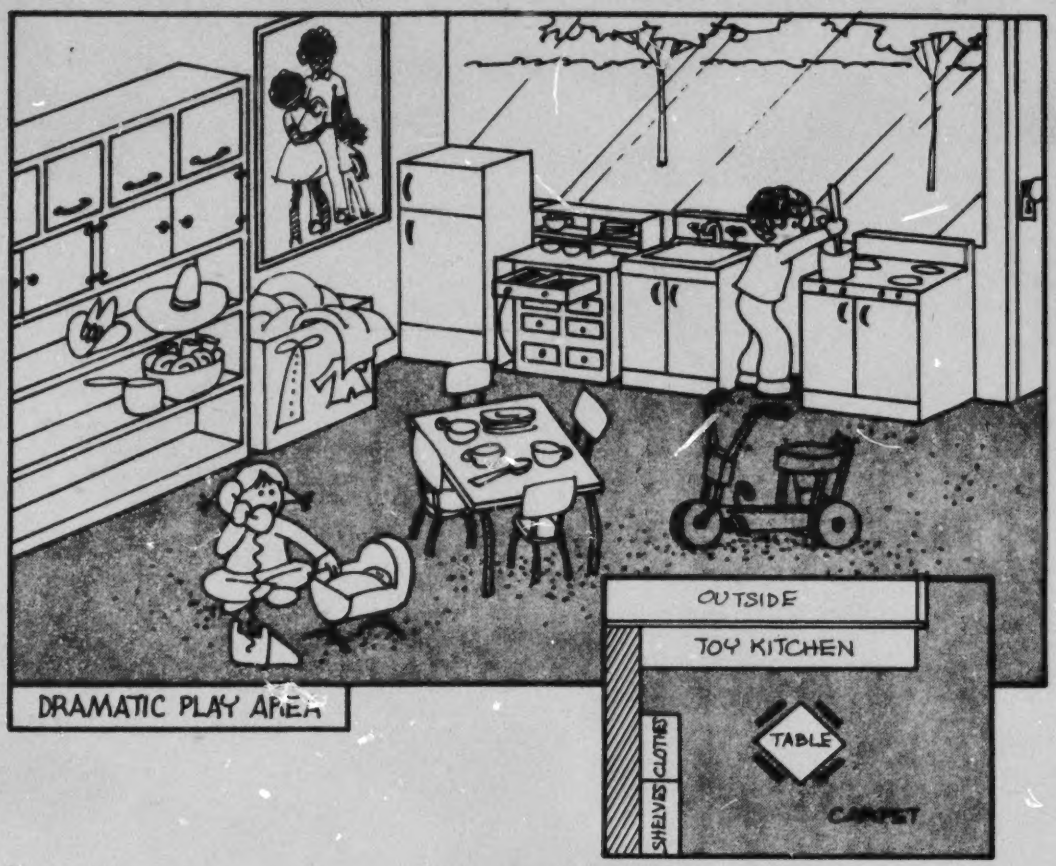
   All materials are stored in one set of shelves set at a child's height. Keeping all the materials in one place helps children return them. The open shelves allow children to select what they want. The amount of materials exposed at any time is kept reasonably modest so that children are not overwhelmed by the number of choices and are able to see clearly all available materials. There is storage space above the shelves where the teacher keeps other materials she wants to put out at another time.

Activity IV-D

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 93 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Ms. Jones and Smith would like a permanent area where children can engage in dramatic play. For the next two weeks they want the play to revolve around family roles, e.g., mother-father, daughter-son, brother-sister. They'd like the children to have easy access to a wide range of props for imitative play, but they also want the props stored so that the children will put them back where they belong. They want the area arranged so that there is no traffic going through the area; they are also concerned that the noise made in the area may disturb other children. They feel that in this kind of play ("house play") children should have the opportunity to "build their own house" so they want the area to provide opportunities for this activity.

Illustration for Activity IV-D



Description of the Area

A carpeted corner of the classroom was selected as a location to set up a dramatic play area. The area is supplied with a toy kitchen set including a sink, stove and refrigerator, as well as storage for eating and cooking utensils. Storage cabinets similar to those used in the manipulative play area are also provided in the dramatic play area. On the lower shelves are props and materials that the children might use in play revolving around family roles. Other materials that could be used in other dramatic play themes are stored above the shelves.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How will the children know where to return the props or materials when they finish playing with them?

2. How did the teacher limit the traffic going through the area?

3. What was done to insure that the noise made by children playing in the area would not distract others?

4. Next to what other area might you locate the play area in order to provide "house building" opportunities in the area?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-D

1. How will the children know where to return the props or materials when they finish playing with them?

   Some of the props (e.g., eating and cooking utensils) are stored in specific areas similar to those where these items are found in many (but not all) homes. For example, tableware is kept in the tableware drawer and pots and pans are stored under the stove. In general, the children know that all the dramatic-play materials belong at this center, either on the open shelves or in specific storage spaces (as in the case of tableware). Loose items of clothing and costumes are stored in a big box labeled with pictures of various types of clothing.

2. How did the teachers limit the traffic going through the area?

   Locating the area in the corner of the room keeps it out of a main traffic flow. However, the area is still subject to traffic in that children may walk in and out of the area with no restrictions and go through the area while moving about the room.

3. What was done to insure that the noise made by children playing in the area would not distract others?

   You can't insure that others won't be distracted, but you can make distraction less likely by carpeting the area, by reducing the number of children in the area at any one time, and by reminding children to "keep the volume down" when others are being disturbed.

4. Next to what other area might you locate the play area in order to provide "house building" opportunities in the area?

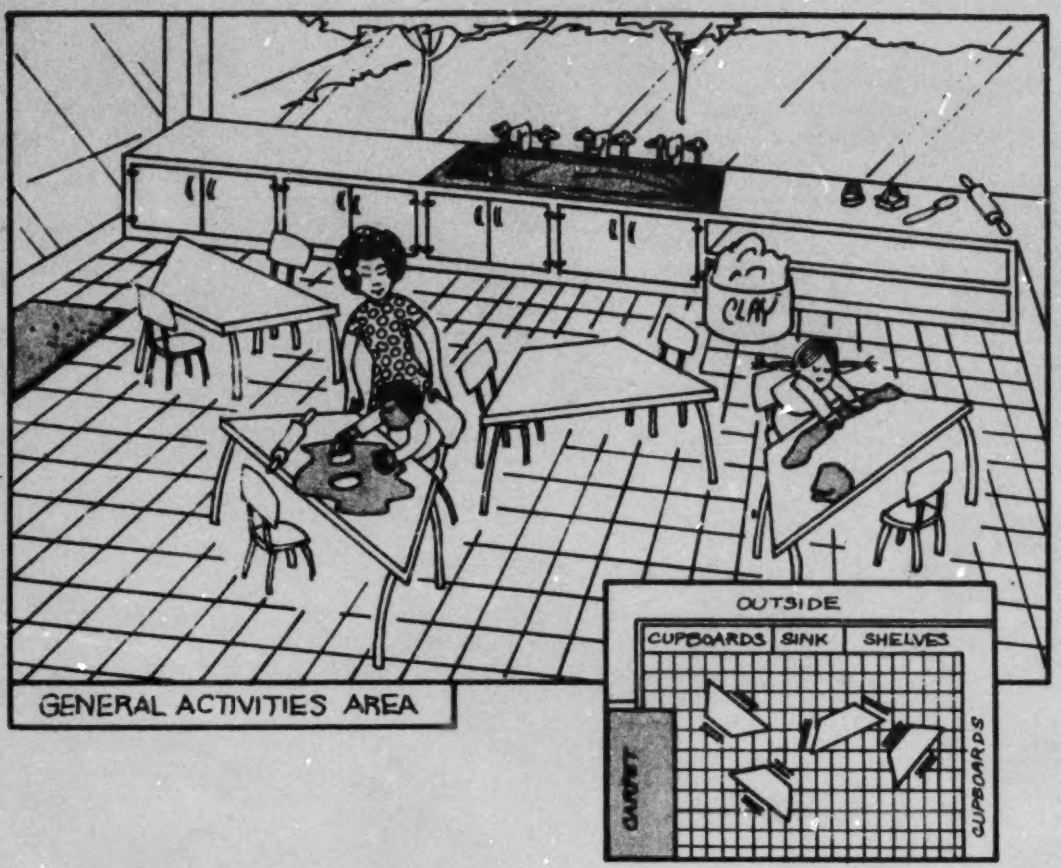
   In this instance, the dramatic-play area has been located next to the block area. There is free access between the two areas so that they can merge together and complement each other. Children in the dramatic-play area can use blocks for "house building" activities. (See classroom overview, page 106.)

Activity IV-E

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 99 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

Once a week, Ms. Jones and Smith set up an area for play with ceramic clay. This week they want the children to explore various shapes while playing with the clay. They want the area close to a water supply where children can wash. They also want the area to be arranged so that the mess associated with clay will not damage the floor. Since the activity is popular but is offered only once a week, they want the area to be large enough to support eight children. But they also want to arrange the area so that the children are somewhat separated, in order to keep them from interfering with one another's activities. They also want to provide hard surfaces so children can pound and work the clay. They think there ought to be an area where children can dry their products.

Illustration for Activity IV-E



Description of the Area

This is a large area with tiled floor. There are four tables that can be put together to form a larger surface. In this instance, the tables are separated. The area has a large sink, storage cabinets, low open shelves, and child-height counters. This area can be used for many purposes, but is now set up for play with clay.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA.

1. How did the teachers provide room for eight children, but keep them somewhat separated?

2. How is the floor protected from the messy clay?

3. Where would the children dry their ceramic products?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-E

1. How did the teachers provide room for eight children, but keep them somewhat separated?

   Rather than allow all the children to work at one large table, Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones provided four smaller tables with two chairs each. That way the children were somewhat separated.

2. How is the floor protected from the messy clay?

   The floor is tiled, thus making easy clean-up feasible.

3. Where would the children dry their ceramic products?

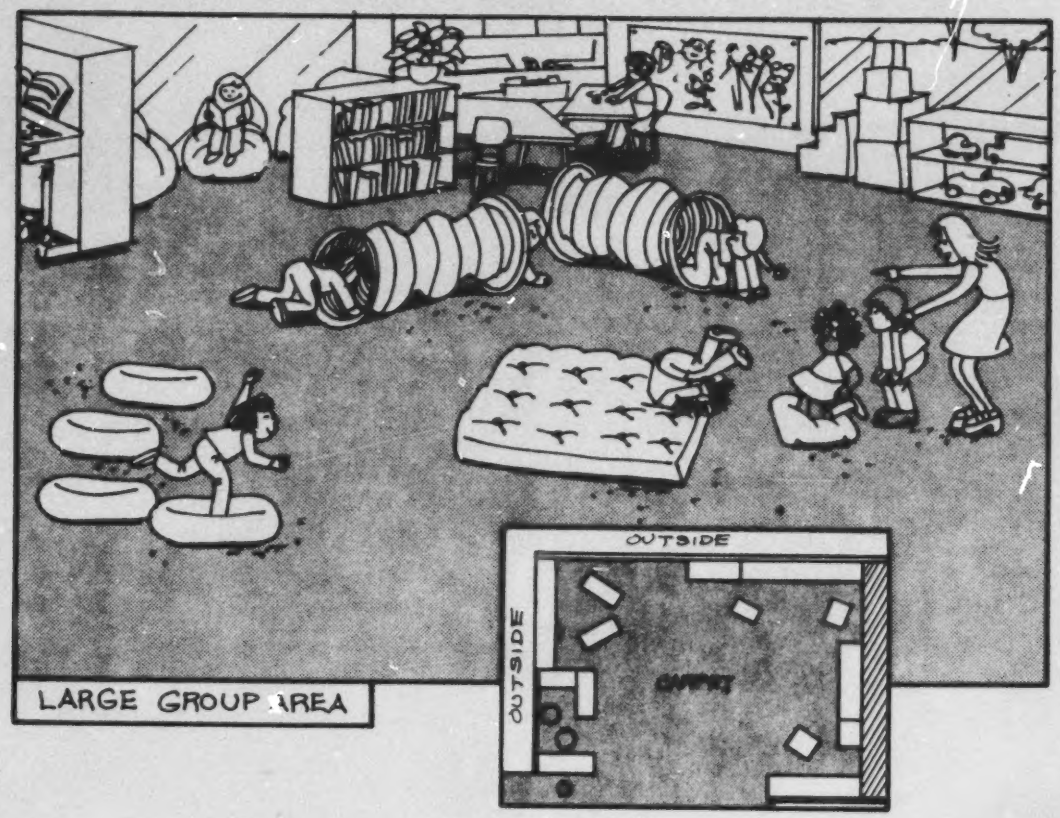
   Low shelves covered with sheets of cardboard serve as a drying place for clay constructions.

Activity IV-F

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 103 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION

Because the children do not get enough opportunity to play outside, Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith would like to provide adequate space in the classroom so that some children can be physically active. One day of the week they want to provide an "obstacle course" where children can crawl and climb through and over objects, somersault, run, etc. They want to hold the size of the group to six or seven, but they also want plenty of room so that the children will not be cramped in their activity.

Illustration for Activity IV-F



Description of the Area

The center of the room has been kept clear so that there is one large open and carpeted area. At present, Ms. Smith and Jones have furnished the area with objects to crawl through, jump on, roll over, etc.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

1. How would Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith limit the number of children to six or seven when the area is set up as an obstacle course?

2. How does the area provide for physical "large-muscle" exercise and yet contain the movement so that it does not flow into other areas?

Follow-Up to Activity IV-F

1. How would Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith limit the number of children to six or seven when the area is set up as an obstacle course?

   There is no physical way to limit the number of children. Therefore, other techniques will have to be used. Setting some classroom limits or rules and making sure that there are other activities to compete with the excitment of the "obstacle course" are practical solutions. If the obstacle course is scheduled so that all the children know they have a chance to play there, it will be easier to maintain the number limit.

2. How does the area provide for physical "large-muscle" exercise and yet contain the movement so that it does not flow into other areas?

   By arranging the obstacle course in a circle, the adults keep the activity flowing within a contained area. Likewise, the tunnels and various parts of the course all serve to direct and channel the children's movements.

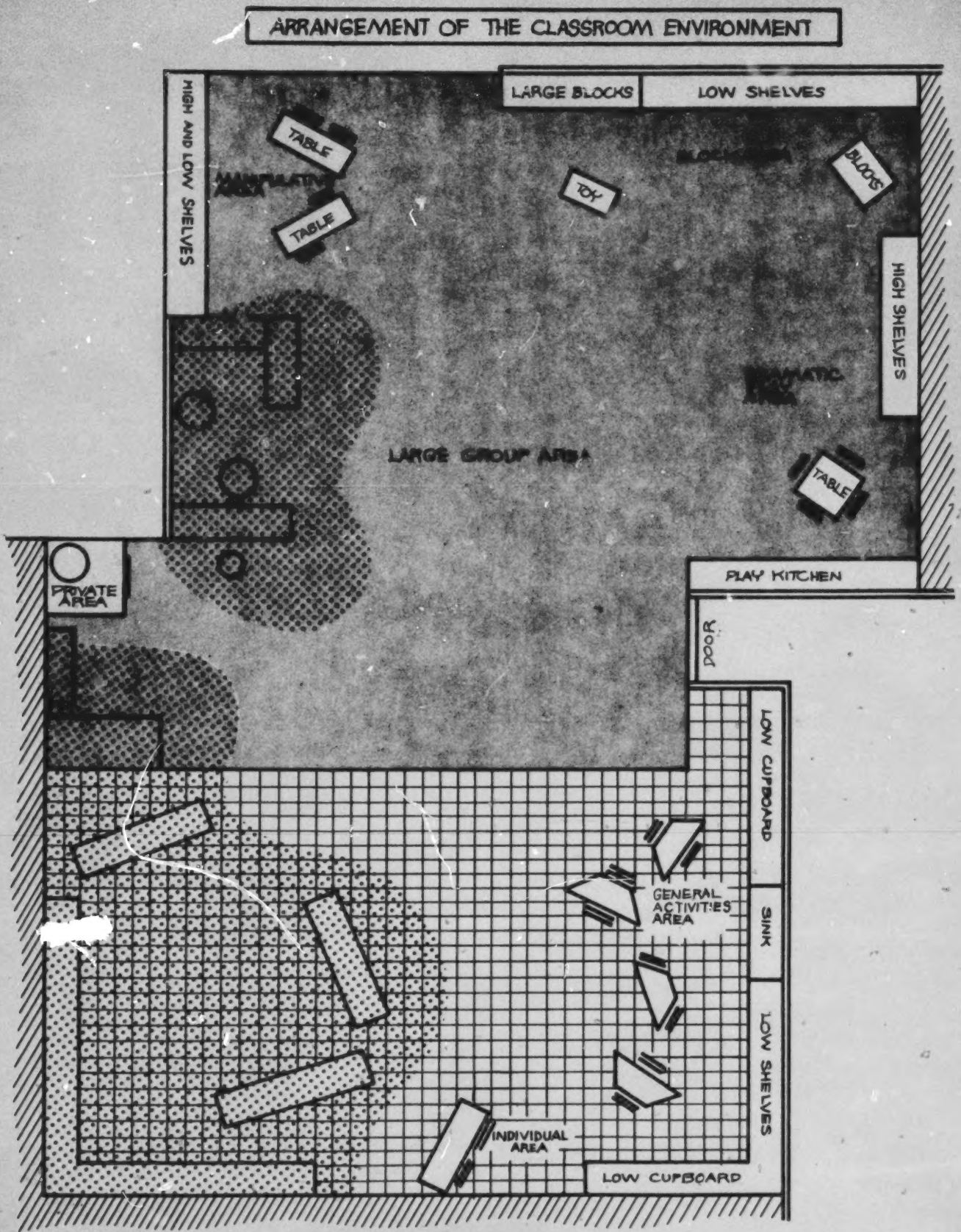
Activity IV-G

READ THE FOLLOWING AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON PAGE 107 AFTER LOOKING AT THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATIONS AND THE ACCOMPANYING DESCRIPTION

When Ms. Jones and Ms. Smith were arranging their classroom, they had a number of concerns about the location of various activity centers. For one, they wanted the centers or areas located in such a way that they would be out of the main traffic paths and somewhat isolated. However, they also wanted the areas arranged so that it would be easy for the adults to visually monitor the activity within the various areas.

They expected the children to make more noise in some activities than in others and so they wanted to put the noisy activities fairly close to each other, yet separated from quieter activities. Also, in some of the activities, it was expected that children would play on the floor and so they wanted these areas to have a comfortable floor covering.

Illustration for Activity IV-G: OVERVIEW OF THE CLASSROOM



Description of the Overall Classroom

Half of the floor is carpeted and the other half is covered with asphalt tile. As you can see, there are some non-labeled areas covered with little dots. This is to indicate that there are other areas in the classroom besides the six areas we've already discussed.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LOOKING AT THE ILLUSTRATION AND READING THE DESCRIPTION OF THE OVERALL CLASSROOM

1. How did the teachers locate the various activity areas so that they would be away from main traffic paths and at the same time be easy for adults to see what was going on in the areas?

2. How were the areas arranged so that noisy activities would be separated from quieter activities.

Follow-Up to Activity IV-G

1. How did the teachers locate the various activity areas so that they would be away from main traffic paths and at the same time be easy for adults to see what was going on in the areas?

   Almost all the areas are put into corners of the room which removes them from the main traffic paths. A minimum of partitions were used in defining the areas so that they are easy to see into.

2. How were the areas arranged so that noisy activities would be separated from quieter activities.

   The teachers put the two noisiest activities (block play and dramatic play) next to each other and on one side of the room away from the other areas. Manipulative play can also be a noisy activity, so it too was located in the "noisy" end of the room. All three noisy areas were located on the carpeted portion of the room because carpeting reduces part of the noise and because the children in these areas play and work on the floor.

Follow-Up to Activities IV-A Through IV-G; General Solutions

The above questions in ACTIVITIES IV-A through IV-G involve a number of common problems a teacher must consider when arranging classroom areas. Here's a list of some of these concerns and some suggested means of meeting them.

HOW CAN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN AN AREA BE LIMITED TO THE DESIRED NUMBER?

* Size of the area:

  One way to limit the number of children is to arrange the area so that only the desired number of children can occupy it.

* The number of seating or working spaces:

  A related way of limiting the number is to restrict the number of sitting spaces or the amount of working space.

* The amount of materials put out:

  By controling the number or amount of materials put out in an area, the teacher can limit the number of children using the area.

* Relating areas to children's interests:

  If a number of areas in the room will attract children, then the number of children going to any one area will be limited.

* Classroom rules:

  By establishing classroom rules, the teacher can restrict the number of children going into an area.

HOW CAN THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC IN THE ROOM BE DIRECTED SO THAT IT WON'T DISTURB OTHER CHILDREN?

* Location of materials:

  Materials can be stored in such a way as to minimize the amount of movement required to retrieve the materials.

* Arrangement of areas:

  Areas can be arranged so there is a common entrance and exit, thereby eliminating traffic through the area.

* Location of working spaces:

  Locate working spaces (such as seating) so that only a limited number of children will be disturbed as others are coming into the area, going out, or getting supplies.

* Location of the area:

  The area can be located away from main traffic patterns such as main entrance and exits, paths to the sink or bathroom, etc.

HOW CAN MATERIALS BE STORED SO THAT THEY ARE VISUALLY AND PHYSICALLY ACCESSIBLE?

* Put materials on open shelves or in containers on the floor.
* Keep materials at child height.
* If materials are out of view, such as in cupboards, put pictures or examples of the materials on the outside of the containers.
* Don't stack materials so that they hide each other.
* Limit the amount of materials displayed in the room so that children can easily find what they want.

HOW CAN MATERIALS BE STORED SO THAT THE CHILDREN CAN PUT THEM BACK WHERE THEY BELONG?

* Don't make the task physically or intellectually too difficult (e.g., putting materials like crayons, or cuisenaire rods, back together in complete sets).
* If objects must be sorted, make the basis of sorting simple (e.g., by color, shape, etc.).
* Provide containers into which children can return objects.
* Put outlines of objects on shelves or put examples of the objects where they are supposed to be returned.
* Limit the amount of materials in the area to a reasonable quantity.

HOW DO YOU REDUCE THE NOISE IN AN AREA TO KEEP IT FROM DISTRACTING OTHERS?

* Limit the number of children engaged in a noisy activity.
* Put noisy activities on carpets that help to absorb the sound.
* Separate noisy activities from quiet ones (e.g., locate reading and block play in separate areas of the room).
* Provide solid physical partitions between some of the areas to baffle the noise.

HOW DO YOU CUT DOWN DISTRACTIONS IN AN OPEN CLASSROOM?

This question is a critical one that concerns many prospective or seasoned teachers who are new to an "open classroom." Most of the issues discussed so far relate to this problem. Let's review them.

* Traffic: If you cut down the amount of traffic in the room or the amount of movement from one area to another, or arrange the room so that traffic does not disrupt children, you will find that you are at the same time eliminating classroom distractions.
* Noise: By cutting down the amount of noise made in areas or in the classroom in general, you will cut down classroom distraction.
* Boredom: If you provide an interesting and stimulating choice of activities, children will be less likely to engage in distracting activities.
* Visual distraction: If your areas are visually isolated from each other, you will reduce distraction by reducing

the degree to which activities in one area attract the attention of children in another area.

* Number of children together: If the number of children working together is kept at a reasonable level, there will be fewer distractions because there will be less large-group interaction.

* Comfort: If areas are made comfortable and are well suited to the activity of the area, children will be less likely to become restless and distractive.

* Self-direction in activities: The more children can become self-directed in their activities, and the more you can help them become so, the less likely they are to distract others.

* Meeting needs for privacy: If children who want to be alone can find a place where they will have some privacy, they are less likely to become disruptive.

CHAPTER 5

VARIATION IN THE SIX PRIMARY AREAS AND PHYSICAL FLEXIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

Throughout the previous chapters, we have talked about six types of classroom areas referred to as the "six primary classroom areas." This chapter explores a number of area types that are variations of the six primary areas. In addition, Chapter 5 deals with some of the reasons you may have for altering the six primary areas to suit your own needs. Toward the end of the chapter we discuss the general issue of physical flexibility in the classroom.

In the last chapter, you were given a number of "thinking" activities. The present chapter is organized around two similar tasks. In the first one, you are asked to make up and describe two possible classroom areas that do not correspond to any of the six primary areas. In the second activity, we describe some non-primary areas and your task will be to think of some reasons why these areas might be more appropriate, under certain circumstances, than the primary areas. After each of these activities (V-A and V-B), there are short follow-up discussions.

Instructions for Activity V-A

As briefly mentioned above, to complete ACTIVITY V-A you need to think of two classroom areas that are variations of any of the six primary areas. You can use your imagination to invent these two areas or you can describe actual classroom areas. As you think of what these two areas look like, describe them on FORM G (page 117).

If you look at FORM G, you can see that we have listed five area variables that should be familiar to you. When you describe the areas, describe them in terms of thes five variables. That is, indicate the number of children that can use the area; whether it has no specific purpose or function, one purpose, or a few different purposes; whether materials are stored there and, if so, whether they relate to the purpose of the area; whether the area is completely enclosed, partially defined by boundaries, or has no boundaries; and finally, what type of working facilities the area has.

You may find it helpful to review some of the previous materials before you complete ACTIVITY V-A. Pages15-28 from Chapter 1 and pages 42-48 from Chapter 2 should be especially helpful. Special attention should be given to Table 2, page 50.

Name: _____

FORM G — Describing Two Areas That Are Variations of the Six Primary Areas

(For use in completing ACTIVITY V-A. See instructions on page 115.)

In the spaces below, describe two classroom areas that are <u>not</u> examples of the six primary classroom areas. Use the five variables to describe the areas you have in mind.

<u>AREA 1</u>

SIZE:

FUNCTION:

BOUNDARIES:

MATERIALS:

WORKING FACILITIES:

<u>AREA 2</u>

SIZE:

FUNCTION:

BOUNDARIES:

MATERIALS:

WORKING FACILITIES:

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity V-A

In Chapter 1, where we introduced the six primary areas, and in Chapter 2, where we explored learning centers in more depth, you saw that by using certain common variables, we could describe or characterize classroom areas. As you probably found out in ACTIVITIES I and II, most classroom areas are not exactly like the six primary areas we've been discussing. That is, most classroom areas are variations of the primary areas. One of the things we want to explore in this chapter is the kinds of variations that contribute to the smooth functioning of the classroom. But first, we need to look at some of the variations themselves.

The five variables discussed in Chapter 1 and used on FORM G are called "variables" because areas can vary with respect to them. As a review, let's briefly look at how some of these variables show up in different ways.

SIZE: Obviously, the size of an area can vary from a space big enough for one child to another big enough for all the children in the classroom.

FUNCTION: We've also discussed how areas can vary in their relationship to functions. Areas can be set up for no specific purpose, for one purpose or type of activity, or for a variety of activities.

BOUNDARIES: An area can be completely enclosed, or partially enclosed, or not enclosed at all. These are some of the ways boundaries can vary.

MATERIALS: We've also seen that areas can vary with respect to classroom materials. There may or may not be materials stored in the area. Likewise, the materials in the area may relate

to the purpose of the area, or to only one type of activity carried out in the area, or they may not relate to the purpose of the area.

WORKING FACILITIES: Finally, we've seen that the facilities (such as what children sit or work on) can vary. For convenience, we talked about working acilities for children to sit at and facilities for working while they stand up or sit on the floor.

If we were to consider just these five variables (and, of course, other variables are possible) and some of the ways we've indicated they might vary, we would describe literally hundreds of different types of classroom areas.

Let's consider three possible areas that are variations of the six primary areas.

MANIPULATIVE GAME AREA:

1. One possible classroom area for four to five year old children might have the following description:

   SIZE: Up to 10 children can work in the area.

   FUNCTION: The area is designed to support activities using small manipulative materials and children's competitive games.

   BOUNDARIES: The area is in the corner of the room with low storage shelves coming out from one of the walls.

   MATERIALS: Many games and manipulatives materials are stored in the area; e.g., cuisenaire rods, wooden table blocks, color cubes, picture puzzles, dominoes, concentration cards, etc.

   WORKING FACILITIES: There are two tables with chairs in the area and floor space where six children could play on the floor.

Except for its size, this area is essentially a combination of the two types of learning centers, (Types C and D).

LISTENING CENTER:

2. Another possible area, one for five- to six-year-olds, might look like this:

SIZE: One to two children.

FUNCTION: Set up as a listening center.

BOUNDARIES: The area does not have any physical boundaries.

MATERIALS: Materials and equipment for listening are stored in the area. Some of the materials are used elsewhere as well.

WORKING FACILITIES: The listening equipment and materials are stored on a table. There are two chairs at the table.

This is not a private area because it has materials stored there, a specific function, and no boundaries. It is not an individual area because the area has a specific function and related materials. It is not a learning center because it is too small, and because there are no boundaries. It is not a general classroom activity area because it is too small and has a specific function and related materials. Now is it a large-group area. And yet, it may be a perfectly "good" classroom area. We'll explore that issue in ACTIVITY V-B.

LANGUAGE, MATH, SCIENCE CENTER:

3. Our third imaginary area (for six- to seven-year-olds) has the following characteristics;

SIZE: Up to 10 children can occupy this area at the same time.

FUNCTION: The area is used for many purposes. Mathematics (workbooks, manipulative objects, and apparatus, such as balance beams,

pencil-and-paper calculation exercises, etc.); language (language workbooks, word games, handwriting activities, etc.); science (nature exhibits, experiments, etc.).

BOUNDARIES: The area is a large U-shaped space with storage shelves on all three sides.

MATERIALS: Most of the classroom materials related to language, math, and science activities are stored in the area. However, some of the materials used in this center are stored elsewhere in the room.

WORKING FACILITIES: There are two tables in the area with a total of 10 chairs arranged around them.

This third area is like a learning center with working surfaces, (Type C) except for the larger number of children who can use the area and the fact that many functions are possible.

As you can see in your own examples and in the three examples we've just discussed, many likely classroom areas are variations of the six primary ones discussed throughout most of this unit. There is nothing sacred about the six primary areas, but variations from them should be planned. In the next activity (ACTIVITY V-B), we will explore some of the possible arguments for and against the variations represented in the three example areas just discussed.

Instructions for Activity V-B

In ACTIVITY V-B your task is to consider carefully the three example areas we presented in the FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY V-A and to make up, in your own mind, some reasons for and against organizing at least two of these areas in the way we have presented them. When you are ready to write your answers, use FORM H (page 125).

Name:_____

FORM H — Evaluation of Two Imaginary Areas

(For use on evaluating two of the three areas described on pages 119 to 121.)

SELECT TWO OF THE THREE AREAS AND WRITE DOWN SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS THAT CRITICIZE AND DEFEND TWO OF THESE AREAS.

AREA 1: MANIPULATIVE GAMES AREA for four- to five-year-olds

What are some possible reasons this area should not be organized this way?

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

AREA 2: LISTENING CENTER for five- to six-year-olds

What are some possible reasons this area should not be organized this way?

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

AREA 3: LANGUAGE, MATH, SCIENCE CENTER for six- to seven-year-olds

What are some possible reasons this area should not be organized this way?

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity V-B

In the following, we discuss some of our own arguments for and against the three example areas.

AREA 1: MANIPULATIVE-GAMES AREA for four- to five-year-olds

What are some possible reasons this area should not be organized this way?

A. The size of this area (accommodating 10 children) is the only real point that distinguished it from the Type C and D learning centers we've discussed elsewhere. Here are some of the possible drawbacks to an area of this size:

1. There may not be enough interesting materials to keep 10 children occupied and interested in their play or work.
2. A group of 10 children may lead to distractions among the children in the group. Likewise, the children may prove distracting to other children in the classroom.
3. The teacher may have a harder time monitoring or directing the children when there are 10 children in the area. This will make it harder to individualize her attention in the area.

B. Putting together general manipulative materials (like small blocks or picture puzzles) and interactional games that two or more children play (like concentration) is another possible drawback to this area. Although the materials seem similar, they involve different behaviors that may conflict with each other. If a child is trying to solve a puzzle, the activity associated with competitive games may be distracting.

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

A. There may be a positive side to having the area large enough for 10 children. For one, this allows access to the same materials for more children at the same time. For another, having a larger number of children in one area may make it easier to keep track of who's doing what.

B. The use of open floor space as well as tables gives the area a versatility that is well matched to the activities. Some manipulatives and games are easier to use or play with on tables and some are easier on the floor.

AREA 2: LISTENING CENTER for five- to six-year-old children

What are some possible reasons this area could not be organized this way?

A. As in our discussion of the previous area, the size of the listening center could be a drawback in that it is large enough for only two children. This restricts the area somewhat more than seems necessary.

B. The use of tables and chairs also seems like a drawback to the area. The listening activities may better be carried out where the children could sit more comfortably, such as on a few large pillows.

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

A. The small size of the area may be justified if the activity is not pursued by very many children. Also, sometimes there is

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only one piece of equipment, such as a tape-recorder or a record player, and too many children in the area would lead to conflicts over what to listen to, etc.

B. Not enclosing the area has some possible advantages in that it makes it possible to arrange special occasions where a larger group of children can gather around (sitting on the floor or bringing chairs) to share in some listening experiences.

AREA 3: LANGUAGE, MATH, SCIENCE CENTER for six- to seven-year-olds

What are some possible reasons this area should not be organized this way?

A. As in the first area we discussed, making a learning center large enough for 10 children raises certain possible problems. Briefly, these involve: mutual interferences, level of noise, amount of materials, and adult supervisory functions.

B. Another possible concern relates to having one area set up for three different types of curricular activities. If only one activity at a time is allowed in the area, then the rest of the materials are available to children only if they come into the area and take the materials somewhere else. On the other hand, if two or three activities go on at the same time in the same area, management problems are more likely to arise, thus raising the possibilities for distraction.

What are some possible reasons for the area to be organized this way?

A. One argument for having an area set up for as many as three different types of curricular activities is that it would allow an individual to station herself in the area and help direct children to individualized activities within the subject areas. That is, activity in language, math, or science. At the same time she would be there to provide assistance when needed. In a sense, this allows the teacher to monitor and direct a number of activities at the same time without moving around in the room.

Physical Flexibility in the Classroom

As you may have already sensed, it is really impossible to evaluate an area in terms of whether it is "good" or "bad" without taking into consideration the actual classroom in which the area is located. You need to consider a number of general questions regarding the nature of your resources; for example, the amount of space you have to work with, the physical design of the classroom, the storage facilities, etc. You also have to consider how you want the classroom to operate. Do you want many different activities going on at the same time, or scheduled throughout the day? These are some of the topics we discussed in Chapter 3.

Most important, however, is the actual day-by-day functioning of the classroom. You cannot tell whether an area serves your purpose until you are clear about what you want to have happen and until you observe to see what, in fact, does happen. Likewise, the best way to determine whether another type of arrangement would better suit your purposes is to experiment; that is

to change the arrangement and then observe to see if you get better results.

Being in a position to experiment is critical to all aspects of teaching. Arranging a classroom is part of teaching because the physical environment helps manage the learning activities and classroom behavior. Being able to experiment with the physical arrangement of the classroom means keeping a flexible arrangement that is easy to change as your needs and insights suggest.

The importance of this kind of flexibility in education cannot be overemphasized. In most of our lives, our relationship to our living and working spaces does not vary greatly. Our homes remain much the same and change only gradually, as the family increases or decreases in size or as our budgets allow us to make desired changes. In most instances, even such simple acts as rearranging the furniture are probably rather infrequent. However, the educational environment is not the same as the home environment. The educational facility is designed to support and encourage change on the part of students. As you work with your children during the year, you are hoping to bring about changes in behavior -- both physical and mental behavior. As these hoped-for changes occur, the environment itself needs to change. You probably already accept the idea that as your students change, you must change in your ways of relating to them. We hope you can extend this notion and see that as children change or as your skills in teaching change, the physical environment should also change.

There are many ways that the arrangement of the classroom can be changed. Basically they fall into three categories: (1) areas can be either created or eliminated, (2) the location of areas can be changed, or (3) the areas

themselves can be changed.

1. Creating and Eliminating Classroom Areas:

As to the first issue, you should already be familiar with many types of classroom areas and how to arrange areas to suit your needs and those of the children; that is, we've already discussed "how to create areas," and as for eliminating areas, let common sense be your guide. What we haven't discussed is the importance of adding new areas as new needs arise and eliminating old areas as priorities and classroom activities change.

You may find that some areas are infrequently used or used in a way that creates problems that you want to avoid. Under such circumstances, you might consider eliminating the area. On the other hand, you may have an area that is very successful so you want more children to have access to it. Creating a similar area may be a better solution than enlarging the first area. Likewise, as children become interested in new topics or classes of curricular activities, new areas may be set up to accommodate these new interests.

Another aspect of flexibility leads to more immediate changes than those suggested above. For example, often a classroom is too small to hold all of the areas you might desire. One type of solution is to make minor changes in room arrangement during the day or week. As an example, you may find that there is not enough room for a large-group area. It is possible to arrange the room so that by moving a few tables and chairs, or other facilities that are easy to move (see Section II), you can temporarily eliminate some small areas to create a larger area. There are an endless number of similar examples.

2. Relocating Classroom Areas:

Another way of altering the classroom is to change the location of areas. There are a number of reasons for considering such a move. You may find that an area is not working well in its present location. The area may not have enough light, be too noisy, be located in a main traffic path, have inadequate storage, be next to distracting activities, etc. One possible solution is to move the area to a more suitable location. For example, you might find that the art area is located too far from a water source and thus needs to be moved closer; a quiet activity area may be too close to a noisy activity area and should be separated; or the science area needs to be moved closer to the windows so that better use can be made of the natural light.

3. Changing Classroom Areas:

A third way of altering the classroom is to alter or change the areas themselves. Of the three ways discussed, changing the areas is probably the most important. In an ideal classroom, one would expect to see constant changing of areas, at least with respect to the materials that are made available to the children.

All of the variables that we've used for describing the classroom areas can be altered or experimented with in order to arrive at better arranged areas. The size of the area may be changed by expanding or contracting the working spaces. The physical boundaries of the area can be changed to provide more or less isolation from other areas.

The purpose of the area can also be altered. The area may have one purpose for a few weeks and then be changed to meet other needs.

The functions of the area can likewise be reduced or increased. Along with these changes would come changes in the materials that are stored in the area.

The way that materials are stored in the area may also require modification. If you are often required to find missing items, locate materials for children, or accept other "put and take" tasks, you should probably consider how well suited the material storage is to independent behavior by the children. If any materials are not being used, then there may be another implication for change in the storage arrangements. Maybe the area is so cluttered with educational materials that some are never used because they are buried in a pile. Classroom clutter in areas and on the walls is a common fault.

Working facilities can also be changed as need arises. You might find that materials are taken out of an area to other, more comfortable working spaces. This might indicate that you need to consider how to make the area more appropriate. You might find that some activities carried out on the floor would be easier if children could use a table for their work. Or maybe some activities in an area will require a larger working surface that can be formed by putting some smaller tables together. On the other hand, there may be times when it is better to separate a number of small tables so that there are a number of independent working surfaces.

In Section II of this unit we discuss many examples of different types of classroom facilities: storage facilities, working and sitting facilities, flexible use of the floor surface, raised work and play areas, enclosed spaces, and the use of room dividers. All this material is designed to give you some practical ideas for creating new areas, altering present ones, or making general changes in the classroom facility.

CHAPTER 6

A PLAN FOR CHANGE

Introduction

In this chapter, we will put the previous five chapters into a focus for action. In the first chapter, you observed a classroom to determine whether or not all six primary areas were present and, if not, what changes would have to be made so that at least one of each of the six areas would be evident in the classroom. In Chapter 2, you also made a classroom observation, this time evaluating one of its learning centers and suggesting what changes, if any, would have to be made so that the classroom had at least one learning center that corresponded to our description of a learning center. In the third chapter, you observed the classroom in action, looking at the implications of classroom behavior for the selection of classroom areas. Finally, in Chapters 4 and 5, you completed some thinking tasks where you considered how a teacher might meet her own needs through the arrangement of the classroom and how classroom areas might vary from the six primary areas.

All these activities and their related discussions have been designed to lead ultimately to one outcome, the improvement of preschool and primary classrooms. If this effort in which you shared does not result in better classrooms, then we have failed in our responsibility. By "better," we, of course, mean classrooms that better serve the actual needs f you and your children. It is time, then, to consider an actual classroom and what you would do to improve it. In this chapter, you will develop plans for changing a classroom.

You may, at present, be working in a classroom and have the authority actually to change some aspects of the classroom arrangement. Or you may work in a classroom yet not have that authority. If the former describes your

situation, then your task is relatively straightforward. You need to consider what changes you'd like and what changes are feasible, and then make the changes that are both desired and possible. However, if you do not have the authority to make changes, you are faced with an additional problem, that of convincing others of the reasonableness of your suggestions.

We cannot here resolve this latter problem for you because situations vary widely from one place to another. But we believe that if you have acquired the skills that this unit is designed to promote, you should be in a position of strength in presenting your case to others.

If you are clear about what changes you feel would contribute to a smoother, more efficiently functioning classroom, and if you are clear about how you would make these changes, as well as their feasibility, you have a good chance of winning the cooperative participation of others.

On the other hand, you may not yet be working in a classroom situation. If this is the case, you are not now in a position to make changes. However, most likely you will have the opportunity at some point in your career. If you participate earnestly in the activities of this chapter, you will be better prepared when that day comes.

Overview of Activity VI

Change is often easiest to accomplish when small steps are taken. This is particularly true when the change involves putting new skills into practice. Accordingly, ACTIVITY VI will focus on one change that you would make rather than on a number of changes. Keep in mind, however, that as we emphasized toward the end of Chapter 5, change is always in order in education and never should be viewed as a "one-shot affair."

ACTIVITY VI involves four steps. First, you should observe the classroom for the presence of the six primary areas. This activity is basically the same as ACTIVITY I (Part I) except that here you will determine the number of each area type present, whereas before, you simply observed to see whether each area was or was not present. Secondly, you should evaluate all of the learning centers in the classroom. This second step of ACTIVITY VI is basically the same as ACTIVITY II (Part I) with the difference that before, you observed only one learning center, and here you will evaluate all of the learning centers in the classroom. In the third step of ACTIVITY VI, you must make a decision to take one of three steps:

(1) Add a new area to the classroom or eliminate an old area.

(2) Change the location of a classroom area.

(3) Alter the organization of one classroom area.

In the fourth and final step of ACTIVITY VI, you are asked to indicate why you would make the change you are recommending and to describe in as much detail as possible exactly what type of changes you would make.

ACTIVITY VI should not take more than two hours to complete.

Instructions for Activity VI

Where to observe: Ideally you should try to carry out the observation tasks (Steps 1 and 2) in the same classroom used for ACTIVITIES I, II, and III, i.e., in a classroom you are familiar with. If you work in a classroom, that should be your first choice.

Step 1: FORM I (page 139) has been provided to help you observe the total classroom for the number of each type of the six primary areas. FORM I is

basically the same as FORM A except for the fact that you are asked to count the number of each of the six primary areas. After you have completed FORM I you should refer to Table 1 (page 31) to see what number of each type are recommended for the classroom you are observing. Keep in mind, however, that your own judgment about the ideal number of each area for your classroom is more valid than ours in that, by now, you should know more about the actual functioning of the classroom.

Step 2: FORM J (page 141a) has been provided for evaluating the learning centers. We have provided four copies of FORM J so that you can evaluate at least four areas. If you have more than four learning centers, you need to make extra copies of FORM J. As you may recognize, FORM J is basically the same as FORM C.

Steps 3 and 4: FORM K (page 143) has been provided for the remaining two steps of ACTIVITY I. First, you need to make your choice whether to (1) add an area to the classroom or eliminate an area, (2) change the location of an area, or (3) change the organization or arrangement of an area. Once you have decided, record your decision on FORM K.

The remaining task involves your giving a reason for your choice and indicating the exact nature of the change you would make. For example, if you add an area, indicate why you would add it and describe the area you would add. If you relocate an area, why would you change its location and where would you put the area? If you plan to alter an area, why would you change it and what changes would you make?

Name: _____

FORM I — Number of Six Primary Areas in the Classroom

(For use in classroom observation, Activity VI. See instructions on pages 135+136)

DESCRIPTION OF SIX PRIMARY AREAS

In the boxes below, indicate the number of each area type in the classroom.

PRIVATE AREA: A small enclosed area big enough for only 1-2 children. No materials are normally stored in the area and there is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity. There are no chairs and tables in the private area. ☐

INDIVIDUAL FREE-WORK AREA WITH SEATING: A working area such as a desk and chair. The area is big enough for only 1-2 children. There is no indication that the area is set up for a specific type of classroom activity or for any one particular child. ☐

LEARNING CENTER WITH SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially enclosed area with surfaces for seating work, such as tables and chairs. The area is big enough for at least 3 but no more than 6 children. The area is set up for some specific types of activities and child-accessible materials used in the activity are stored in the area. ☐

LEARNING CENTER WITHOUT SURFACES FOR SITTING WORK: A partially enclosed area with space for children to work while standing up or sitting on the floor. The area is big enough for 3 but no more than 6 children and is set up for some specific types of activities. Child-accessible materials used in the activities are stored in the area. ☐

GENERAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITY AREA: This is an area with working surfaces such as tables where at least 5 but no more than 12 children can work together. The kinds of activities and materials used in this area could easily change from day to day. ☐

LARGE-GROUP FREE AREA: This is a large-group area where all or most of the class could meet at the same time. Basically it is a large open area in the classroom. There are no or few tables and chairs occupying the area. ☐

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Name: _____

FORM J — Evaluation of Classroom Learning Centers

(For use in classroom observation, Activity VI. See instructions on pages 137-138)

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR ONE CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTER BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN.

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to or isolated from through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children of the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

To score, sum up the circled values. [ ]

Name:_____

FORM J — Evaluation of Classroom Learning Centers

(For use in classroom observation, Activity VI. See instructions on pages 137-138)

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR ONE CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTER BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN.

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to or isolated from through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children of the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

To score, sum up the circled values.

Name: _____

FORM J — Evaluation of Classroom Learning Centers

(For use in classroom observation, Activity VI. See instructions on pages 137-138)

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR ONE CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTER BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN.

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to or isolated from through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children of the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

To score, sum up the circled values. [ ]

Name: _____

FORM J — Evaluation of Classroom Learning Centers

(For use in classroom observation, Activity VI. See instructions on pages 137-138)

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR ONE CLASSROOM LEARNING CENTER BY CIRCLING THE NUMBER IN THE "YES" OR "NO" COLUMN.

		YES	NO
1.	Are there working surfaces for sitting work?	1	0
2.	Is the area large enough for at least 3 children but no more than 6?	2	0
3.	Is the area partially or totally defined by physical boundaries?	1	0
4.	Would a child sitting in the area be partially isolated from visual contact with other areas in the classroom?	1	0
5.	Is the area closed to or isolated from through traffic?	2	0
6.	Are materials stored or normally found in the area?	2	0
7.	Are there specific places for most of the materials stored in the area? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
8.	Are most of the stored materials visually evident to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	1	0
9.	Are most of the stored materials physically available to the children? (Answer only if #6 is "YES".)	2	0
10.	Is the area set up for specific types of activities and is this evident to the children of the class?	2	0
11.	Are some of the stored materials in the area related to the activities the area is set up to serve? (Answer only if #6 and #10 are "YES".)	2	0
12.	Are child products that relate to activities carried out in the area present and visible in the area?	2	0

To score, sum up the circled values. [ ]

Name:_____

FORM K — Recommended Classroom Change

(For use in completing Activity VI. See instructions on page 138).

Check (✓) the appropriate box to indicate your decision.

I would add an area or eliminate an area from the classroom.	I would change the location of an area in the classroom.	I would change one of the classroom areas.
☐	☐	☐

Write your answers to the questions below. Use the back of FORM K if you need more space.

1. Indicate why you made the decision indicated above.

2. Describe the exact nature of the changes you would make.

Follow-Up Discussion to Activity VI

We will not go into a lengthy discussion in this follow-up to ACTIVITY VI. The important point is that, except under very unusual circumstances, you should have been able to find at least one important aspect of the total classroom, or an area, that should be changed. In addition, you should by now be in a position to provide well-thought-out reasons not only for why you would make changes, but also for the nature of changes that you would make.

The first two parts of ACTIVITY VI were designed to help you focus your attention on the total classroom and on the quality of the learning centers. The information gathered in these activities should have helped you make your decisions for changing the classroom. Of course, just looking at the physical characteristics of the classrooom is not a completely sufficient basis for making the kinds of decisions required in ACTIVITY VI. You also need to consider the actual behavior of the children, the nature of the curricular activities, and how you want the classroom to function. This unit is not designed to help you determine your teaching objectives. However, it is designed to help you achieve an optimal arrangement of the physical environment so that you stand a better chance of meeting your teaching objectives.

In ending this chapter, we should re-emphasize a point brought up in Chapter 5. It is important to look at ACTIVITY VI as only a beginning step in contemplating changes in your classroom. We limited ACTIVITY VI to a focus on one classroom change because we feel that, by limiting your focus, we would make it easier for you to deal with the problem. But you should not lose sight of the goal of always being ready to make changes in the physical classroom facility as those changes are warranted. It is almost certain that as you grow in your teaching skills, you will become more familiar with the classroom and its operation. And as your children grow, change will be in order.

SECTION II

Classroom Facilities and Resources

Introduction

Section II is different from the previous section in that it deals with the practical "how-to-do-it" side of classroom arrangement. Here we discuss different types of inexpensive "do-it-yourself" forms of storage facilities. Working and seating facilities are discussed in the same light. One chapter deals with the floor surface, covering such topics as floor covering, conversation pits, raised floor surfaces, etc. Additional chapters deal with mezzanine decks, balconies, platforms, and enclosed spaces within the classroom. The final chapter deals with the use of and various forms of room dividers.

Another point that distinguishes Section II from the previous section is that it is much shorter and there is only one activitiy for you to complete; although there are six chapters in Section II, each is very short.

Each of the six chapters has an activity associated with it (ACTIVITIES VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XII). However, you are required to complete only one of the activities.

We should emphasize that you can probably benefit from reading all the chapters in this section, even though your task will be to complete the activity for only one of the chapters.

Overview of Activities VIII Through XII

These six activities are a continuation of ACTIVITY VI in Chapter 6 of the previous section. There you were asked to decide on at least one change you would make in a familiar classroom. The six activities in SECTION II call for

a similar type of decision. First, you need to select one of the six topics that correspond to the six chapters and then complete the activity for that chapter. These topics are:

Chapter 7. STORAGE FACILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter 8. WORKING SURFACES AND SEATING IN THE CLASSROOM

Chapter 9. THE FLOOR

Chapter 10. RAISED WORK AND PLAY PLATFORMS: DECKS, MEZZANINES, AND BALCONIES.

Chapter 11. ENCLOSED AREAS IN THE CLASSROOM.

Chapter 12. ROOM AND AREA DIVIDERS.

When you have selected one of these topics as your focus, you should read the chapter and then complete the activity found at the end of the chapter. The activity requires you to describe the classroom in terms of the focus and indicate whether you would change the classroom and, if so, how.

For example, let's say you pick "WORKING SURFACES AND SEATING IN THE CLASSROOM" as your focus (Chapter 8). After you read Chapter 8, you should complete FORM M (page 181) which is a checklist for describing the working and seating facilities in the classroom. After describing the classroom, you should then complete FORM R (page 227) which requires you to indicate whether you would change the type of facilities and, if so, how you would change them.

As in many of the previous activities you will have to observe an actual classroom to complete one of the SECTION II activities. You do not have to observe the classroom when it is in operation.

Instructions for Activities VII Through XII

After you have looked through the six chapters in Section II, you should select one of the six topics to focus on. When you have selected a chapter and have read it thoroughly, pick a classroom for which you will describe the facilities. Use the form at the end of your selected chapter to describe the room (these are forms L, M, N, O, P and Q). After you have completed one of the forms (L-Q), use FORM R (page 227) for describing what changes, if any, you would make in the types of classroom facilities.

CHAPTER 7

STORAGE FACILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

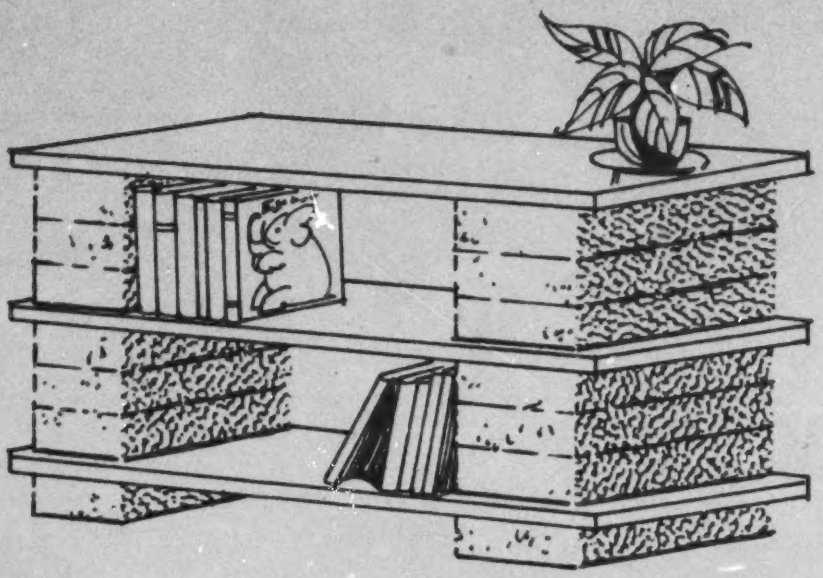
In SECTION I, we discussed a number of important issues regarding how and where materials are stored in the classroom. We saw that storage of materials is related to classroom traffic, to demands placed on the teacher, and to the effective self-directed and goal-directed behavior of the children, especially within learning centers.

In this chapter, we will give a brief review of types of storage spaces, along with some inexpensive and practical suggestions for locating or constructing storage space.

Open Shelves

One of the simplest storage facilities in the classroom can be provided by open shelves. Such shelves have a number of advantages. For one, they are easy to make or purchase; for another, they provide visual contact with the stored materials. If the shelves are low, children can see what's available and select materials on their own. If the teacher does not want children to take materials on their own, then higher shelves--out of reach of children--provide a more protected storage space.

One of the simplest forms of open shelves can be created with the simple use of boards and cinder blocks.

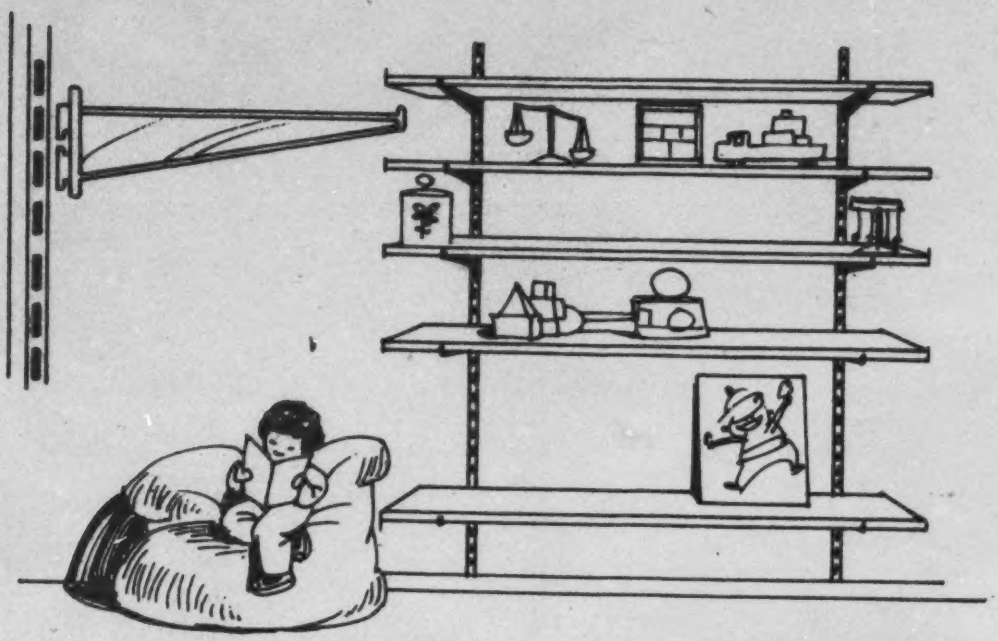


A number of types of materials can be used for construction. The shelves can be made of any material that is strong enough to support the weight of whatever you want to put on the shelves. A wide variety of materials, such as boxes or two-gallon ice cream cartons, can be used as supports for the boards.

Such shelves can be constructed as free-standing or against a wall. Building the shelves away from the wall provides the potential for area dividers or traffic controllers. Additionally, free-standing shelves provide access to the shelves from both sides. However, when free-standing, this type of

construction should not be built higher than three feet in order to avoid its being knocked over.

Another fairly simple means of constructing open shelves requires the use of special hardware; these shelves can be constructed only against a solid surface such as a wall. This type consists of at least two "tracks" that go up the wall. Brackets to hold the shelves can be attached at any point on the tracks.



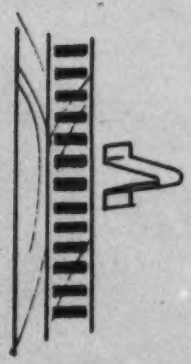
Some advantages of this type of construction are low cost, the fact that you can adjust the distance between shelves to store materials of various size, and the fact that the sturdy construction allows you to include high shelves that will be out of reach of children.

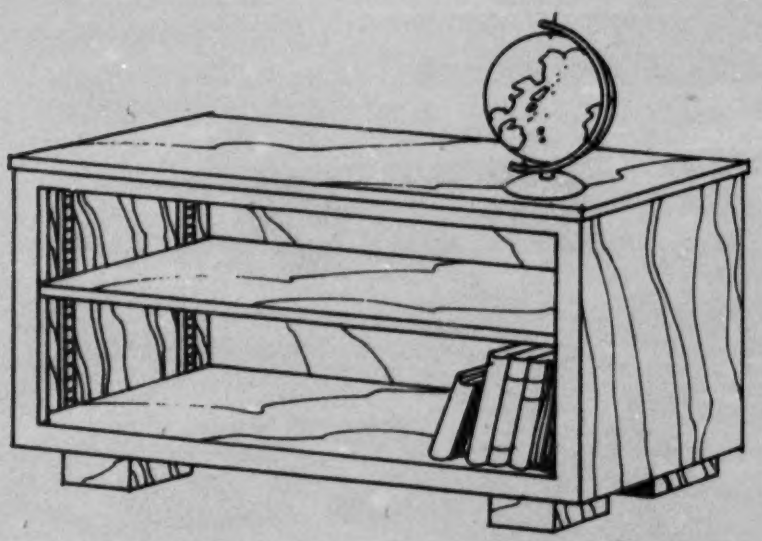
One disadvantage of this type of construction is that the tracks are not easily attached to masonry walls. However, there are a number of devices that allow you to secure hardware to non-wood surfaces. Any "do-it-yourself" book

will provide you with the needed information.

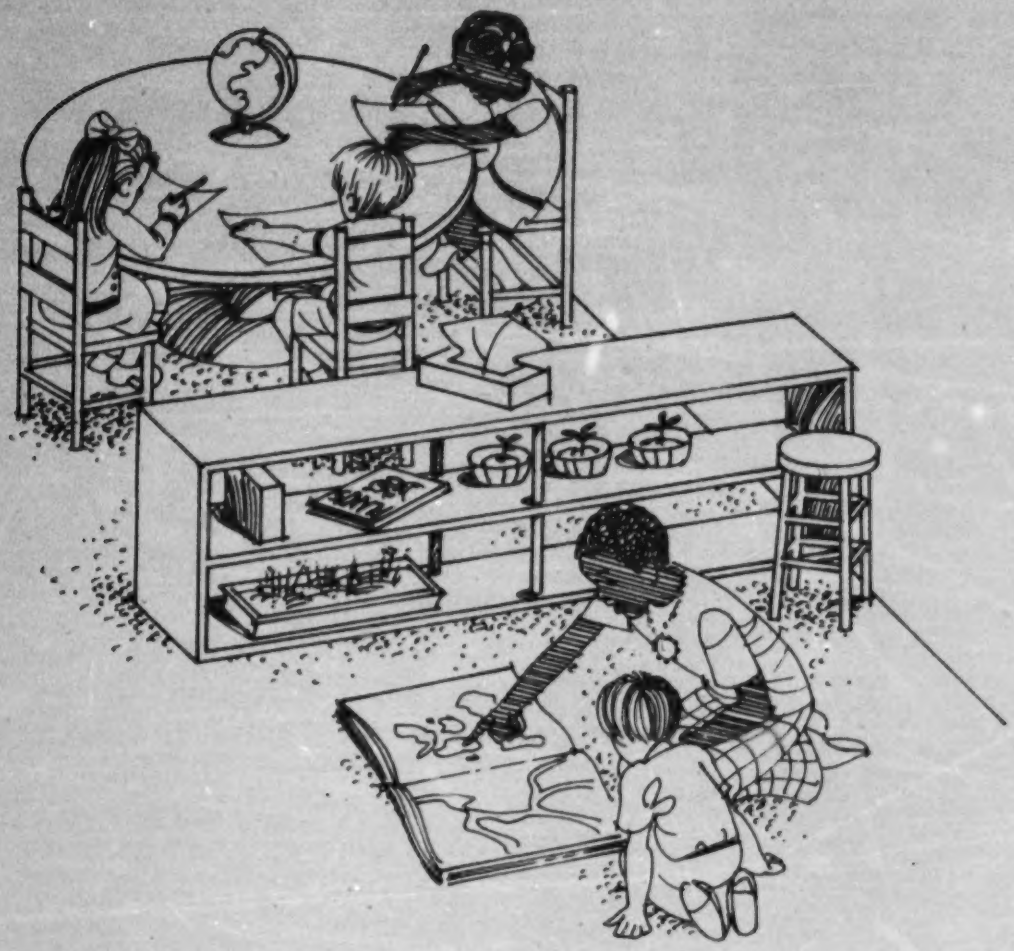
A third type of open shelves is a little more complicated, but is typical of most commercially constructed open shelves. In this third type, the shelves are supported at their ends. Vertical endboards provide the basis for supporting the shelves. Many varieties of support are possible.

Special hardware provides one form of supporting shelves with endboards. It consists of tracks and braces that can be attached to the tracks, thus allowing you to space the shelves at desired intervals.



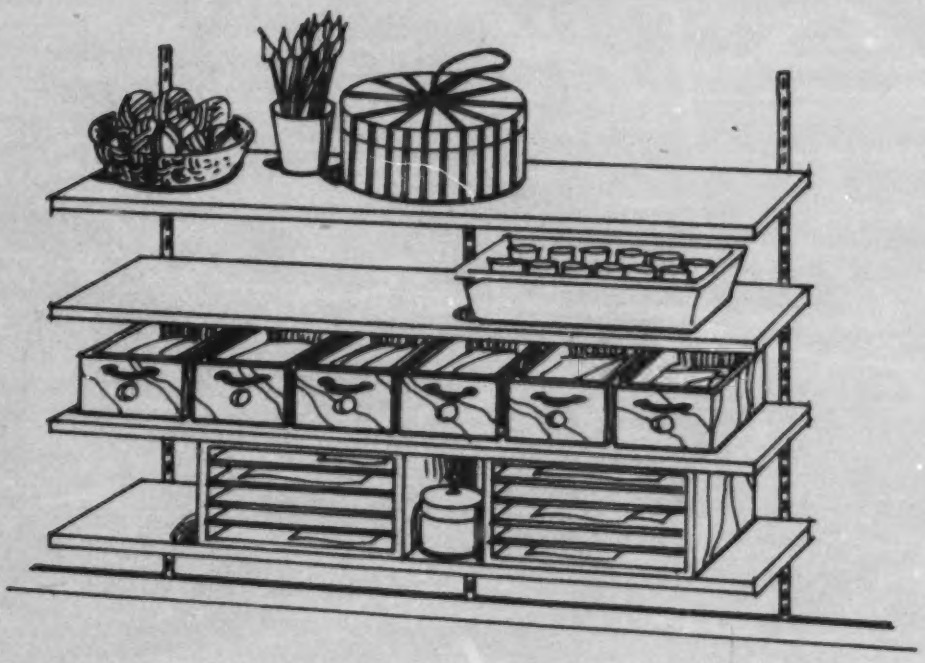


In other situations, the shelves are built as a solid part of cabinets. This kind of shelves can be constructed against the wall or made so that they are free-standing.



As mentioned before, free-standing shelves offer a number of advantages. They can serve as area dividers and traffic controllers and they can be constructed so that the shelves are open on both sides, thus allowing access to materials by children on either side. They can also be fitted with rollers, thus making this type of storage movable to a variety of possible classroom locations.

All forms of open shelves can be made more useful by using them in conjunction with containers for storage of classroom materials.



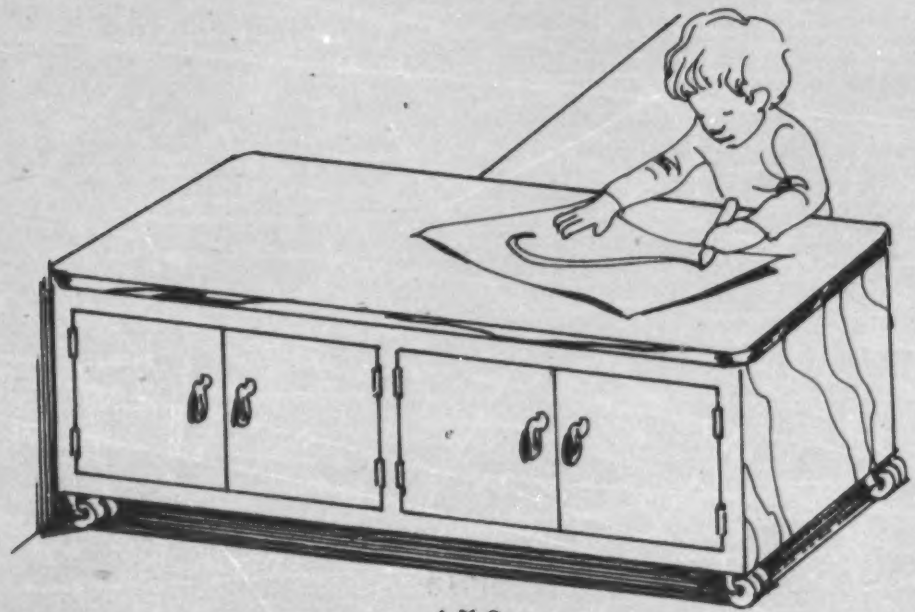
Many inexpensive materials will work as containers: ice cream containers, small cardboard boxes, plastic dish pans, plastic food containers, cardboard paint buckets, baskets, and so on.

Cupboards and Cabinets

Cupboards are another form of storage space that is typically found in classrooms as well as homes. Basically, a cupboard is no more than open shelves with doors on them.

Cupboards have many advantages as storage areas in the classroom. They help cut down the visual clutter of the classroom by keeping materials out of sight. They also allow a teacher to determine which materials are available to children and which are not. Cupboards can be placed out of reach or have locks put on them. Also, it is easier to enforce a rule that says, "Don't go in the cupboard" than one that says, "Don't take materials off the shelves."

Although we are more accustomed to seeing cupboards attached to the wall, free-standing cupboards offer advantages such as those mentioned for free-standing open shelves. They can be used as area dividers or traffic controllers and they allow you to set up learning or resource centers anywhere in the room. Cupboards can also be built low enough so that their tops can provide a working surface for standing work.



Like all other free-standing storage space, cupboards can be fitted with wheels or rollers, thus providing a movable storage space. This not only provides flexibility in where the materials are used, but also supports the general flexibility of the classroom so that it can be re-arranged to serve new needs or eliminate problems encountered in old arrangements.

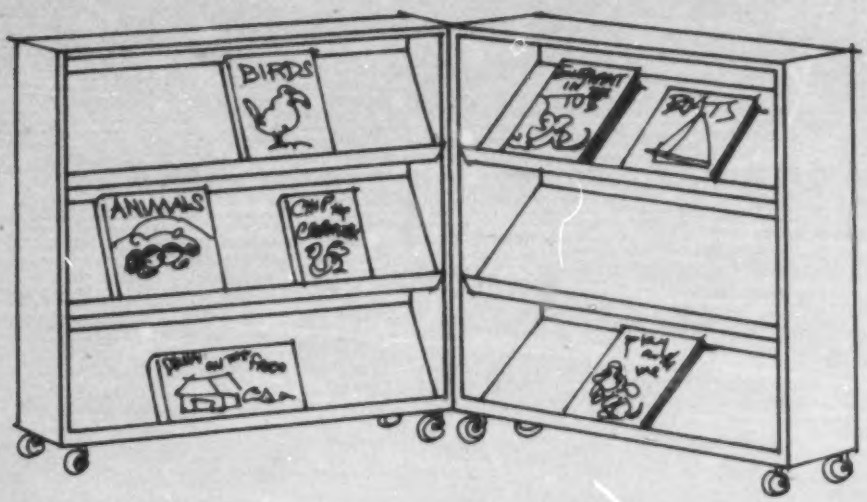
Bookcases

All the open shelves discussed earlier can also serve as bookcases. The main disadvantage of this type of book storage has to do with the display of the books. For young children who are expected to choose their own books (e.g., in a reading corner), it is better if the front covers of the books are displayed.

It is fairly easy to convert open shelves to accomplish this end. You can attach a piece of plywood going from the front of one shelf to the back of the next shelf above it.

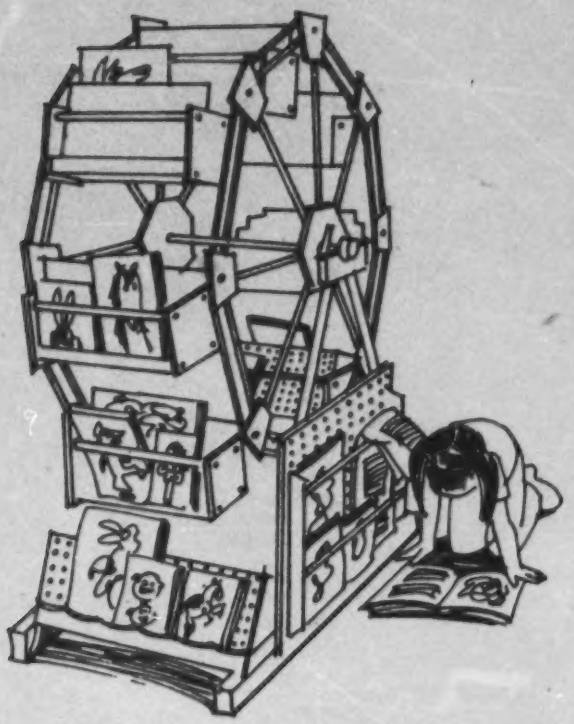
Many commercially constructed book cases for young children are designed to display books in this manner.

As with free-standing open shelves, bookcases can be used as room dividers and can be fitted with rollers so that they can be moved around the room.



One inexpensive source of book storage is found in most supermarkets and drug stores that have revolving racks for book sales and display. During change of management or reorganization of a store, they are often thrown out and can be retrieved for use in the classroom.

This unique "ferris wheel" book display has an appeal to young children and can store a large number of books in a small space.



Cubbies for Individual Storage

In the open classroom, it is important to provide children with their own storage space where they can keep personal belongings. A number of forms of this storage are available. Maybe the easiest is simply to put individual containers on open shelves or in cupboards. Some of the containers mentioned earlier, such as plastic dish pans, are ideal. Individual containers should be labeled with the child's name.

A variation is provided by materials such as ice cream containers, plastic or terracotta sewer pipes, boxes, etc. These can be stacked on top of each other or glued together to form a wall of individual storage spaces.

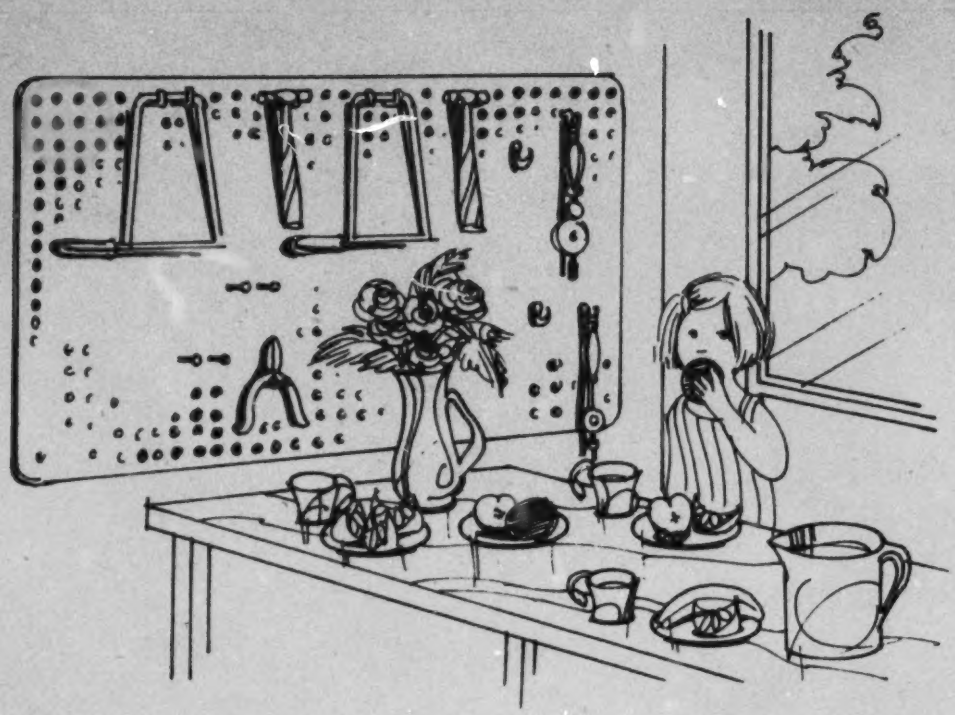
If made to stand alone, they can also serve as area dividers or traffic controllers as well as storage space.

Many attractive and useful kinds of storage facility for individual children, though more expensive than the above-mentioned possibilities, can be constructed out of plywood or regular lumber.

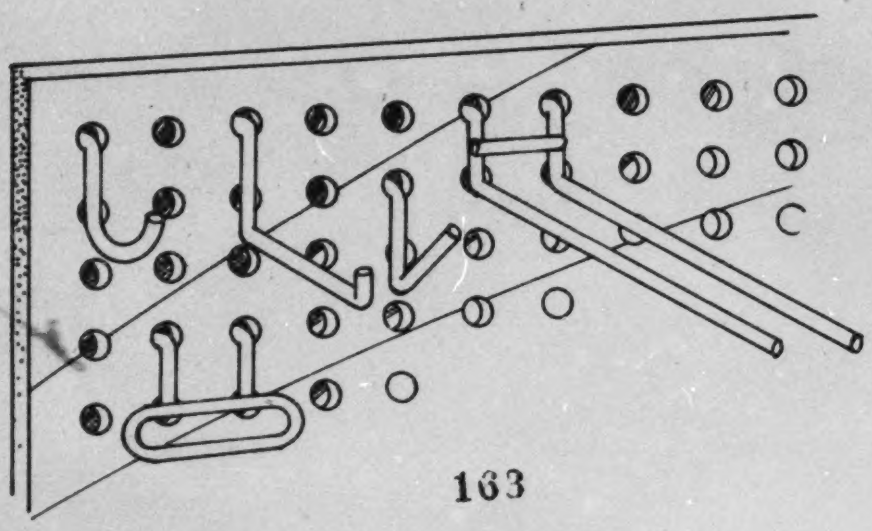
The tops of such a construction can also serve as another surface for display and storage of materials in work and play areas.

Vertical Surface as a Storage Area

Any vertical surface, such as a wall or the back of a cabinet, bookcase, etc., provides a potential storage space. Materials can always be hung on nails or pegs.



A more versatile use of vertical surfaces can be achieved by the use of pegboards carried by most lumber yards and hardware stores. There is a wide range of pegboard hardware that can be used for storage of a wide variety of material. Shelves can be attached to pegboard, as can individual containers or individual objects.



FORM L — Classroom Storage Facilities Checklist

(For use with ACTIVITY VII. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

Are there any open shelves in the classroom? YES☐ NO☐

If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the shelves.

Shelves are above the children's reach .....☐

Shelves are at child height .....☐

Shelves are away from the walls .....☐

Shelves are free and easy to move .....☐

Are there any closed cupboards or cabinets in the classroom? YES☐ NO☐

If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the cupboards or cabinets.

Cupboards are above the children's reach .....☐

Cupboards are at child height .....☐

Cupboards are away from the walls .....☐

Cupboards are free and easy to move .....☐

Are there any bookcases in the classroom? YES☐ NO☐

If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the bookcases.

Books are stored so that their covers are visible.....☐

Bookcases are away from the walls .....☐

Bookcases are free and easy to move .....☐

Are there classroom facilities for individual and personal storage for all the children in the classroom? YES☐ NO☐

Are classroom materials hanging from vertical surfaces such as walls or the backs of cabinets? YES☐ NO☐

If "YES," are the materials at child height? YES☐ NO☐

AFTER COMPLETING FORM L, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

CHAPTER 8

WORKING SURFACES AND SEATING IN THE CLASSROOM

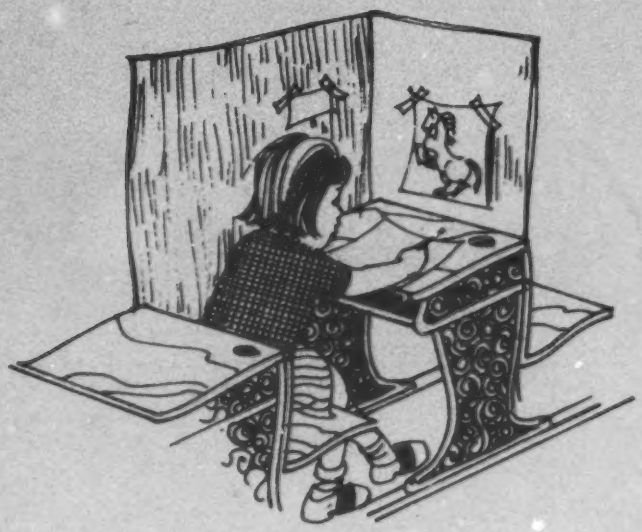
When we think of classroom furniture, the image that most likely comes to mind is the individual desk or study table. Such facilities basically serve one purpose: they provide a surface at which one can sit (or stand) and carry out the desired activity. They may also provide a surface on which to place or store materials, although this is a less desirable use of such furniture and not an ideal form of storage space.

Only a portion of the room should be furnished with tables and desks because, in an open classroom, only a portion of children will be engaged at any one time in work requiring these facilities. The younger the child, the more this holds true. Pre-schoolers will not be spending a great deal of time sitting at a desk or standing at a table. In addition, most children enjoy doing many things (e.g., coloring, drawing, playing games, etc.)while they are sitting on the floor or sitting in comfortable seats.

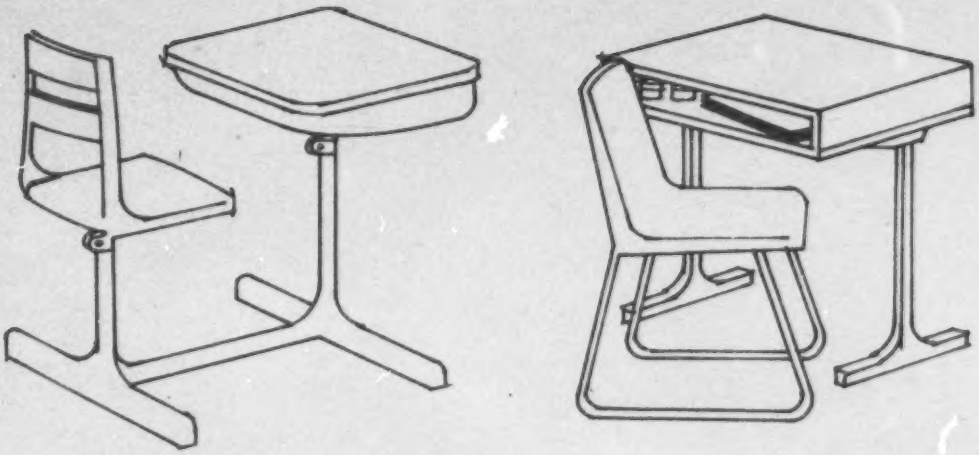
However, desks and tables have their place in the classroom and serve the needs of both the teacher and children. So let's discuss them.

Desks

Classroom desks come in all types. Most of today's adults were schooled in individual desks that were all attached in a long row. Each had its own storage space and attached seat and an ink well. Of all classroom furniture, these desks are probably the least suited to today's open education, although a few modifications can make even these into comfortable and suitable individual working areas.



Most of today's desks are independent modules.



They come with seats attached or with no seats; with tilted tops or level tops; may seat one child or two; may have storage space or none; etc.

The most versatile is a plain desk with a level top and no seat attached. Its versatility comes from the fact that a number of them can be put together to form a larger surface or separated, as desired.

However, a few standard desks with tilted tops, attached seats, and individual storage are still useful in that they provide individual work areas that can be placed in appropriate places in the classroom. Additionally, you may have some children who are not used to an open classroom and still prefer to have their own individual desks with their own storage space. The classroom exists for the children, too; if the need for individually "owned" space exists, it should be met.

Tables

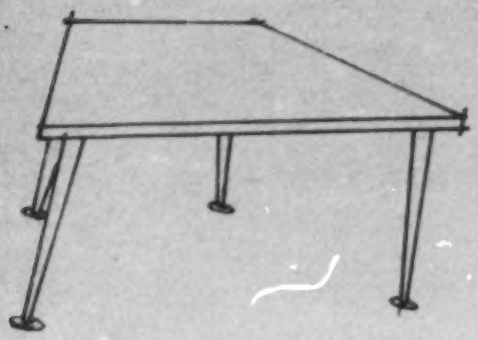
Tables are another common piece of furniture in the classroom. And, like desks, they come in all sizes and shapes.

Some factors to consider are the height, size, and shape of the table. Tables should always be at a comfortable height for the children in the classroom. This may depend upon whether the table is for sitting or for standing work or for both. Height needs to be considered accordingly.

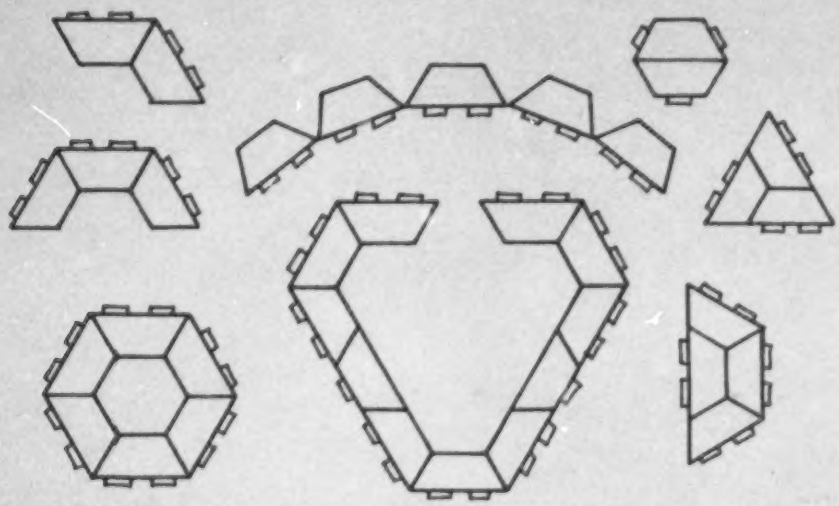
As for size, the smaller table offers more possibilities for different arrangements than does the big table. You can always put small tables together to form one large surface. Likewise, small tables can be arranged in many different configurations.

Of course, the possibility of putting small tables together to form a larger table depends upon the shape of the tables. Round tables cannot be put together to form a complete surface whereas rectangular ones can.

One of the most versatile shaped tables is the trapezoid table.



Trapezoid tables can be arranged in a wide number of configurations.



Other Working Surfaces

Of course, working surfaces are not restricted to standard desks and tables. Many substitutions can be thought of. Built-in or free-standing counters offer one possibility. Some of the possibilities for storage discussed earlier also serve as working surfaces.

Also, the use of writing boards or clipboards provides a useful working surface under a variety of working conditions.

Some inexpensive forms of working surfaces can be constructed out of plywood and boxes or barrels or out of old cable spools discarded by utility companies and industry.

Things you make yourself, especially if the children participate (for example, in painting them), often are more attractive and pleasing to children.

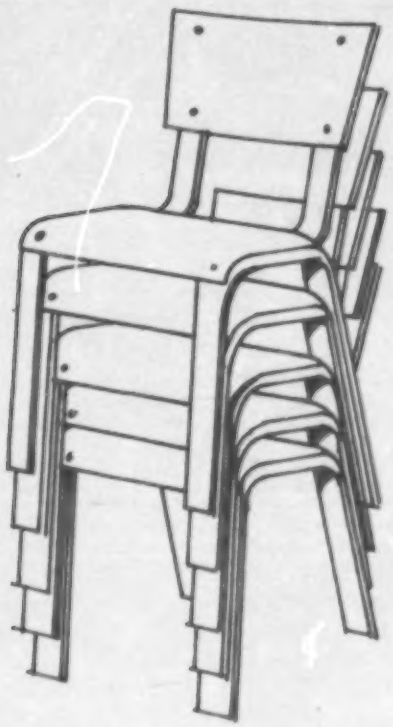
You should also keep in mind that tables need not be set at a height for sitting in chairs. In Japan, for example, tables for many activities, such as serving and eating food, are low enough to allow persons to sit on the floor. Likewise, surfaces can be made so that children can sit on the floor and yet still have a stable or solid working surface.

Seating Arrangements

Seating is another important aspect of the classroom. Often, in the traditional classroom, all children sit in identical chairs, matched with desks, generally all lined up in neat rows. Even in high school and college, seating is generally lined up to face the teacher or the front of the room. In early childhood classrooms today, there is more independent activity and, therefore, fewer situations where the teacher is addressing the entire class. Furthermore, because of individualizing, we often find that, at any one time, children in the classroom may be engaged in a variety of activities requiring a variety of seating arrangements. Thus, the open classroom has a wide range of seating facilities arranged in a wide variety of patterns.

For many of us, perhaps the most familiar object for sitting is the common chair and, as we know, chairs come in every variety of form.

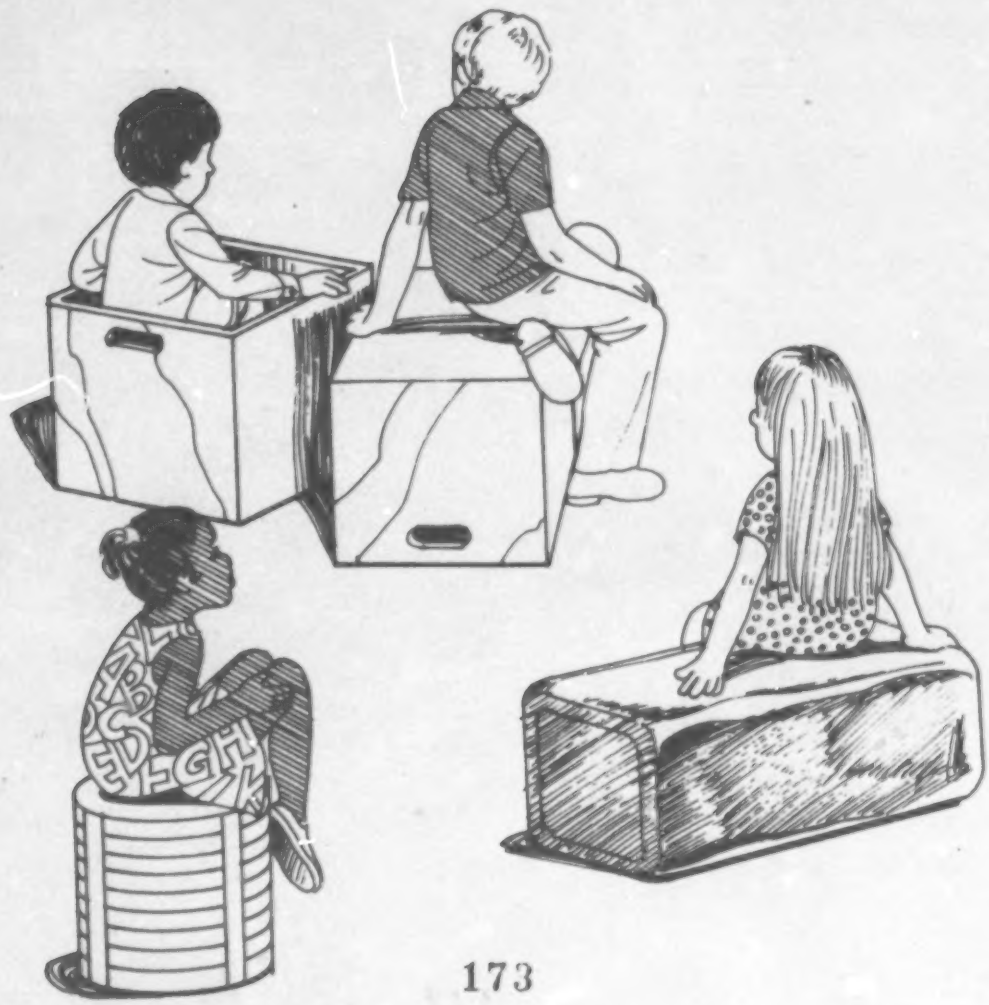
Important considerations in selecting chairs involve their height and appropriateness to the age of the children, the comfort of the chair, and appropriateness to the child's activity. Another factor to consider is storage. Today, many manufacturers produce chairs that can be stacked one on top of another.



Being able to stack chairs on top of each other, means that chairs that are not being used can be stored in such a way that they do not take up more space than a single chair.

Chairs, such as those illustrated on the preceding page, are designed for sitting at tables. They are not very comfortable in other situations.

Children often enjoy a variety of sitting surfaces. Benches can be easily constructed by using a plank and some cinder blocks. In fact, there are a whole range of materials that can be used to provide a sitting surface.

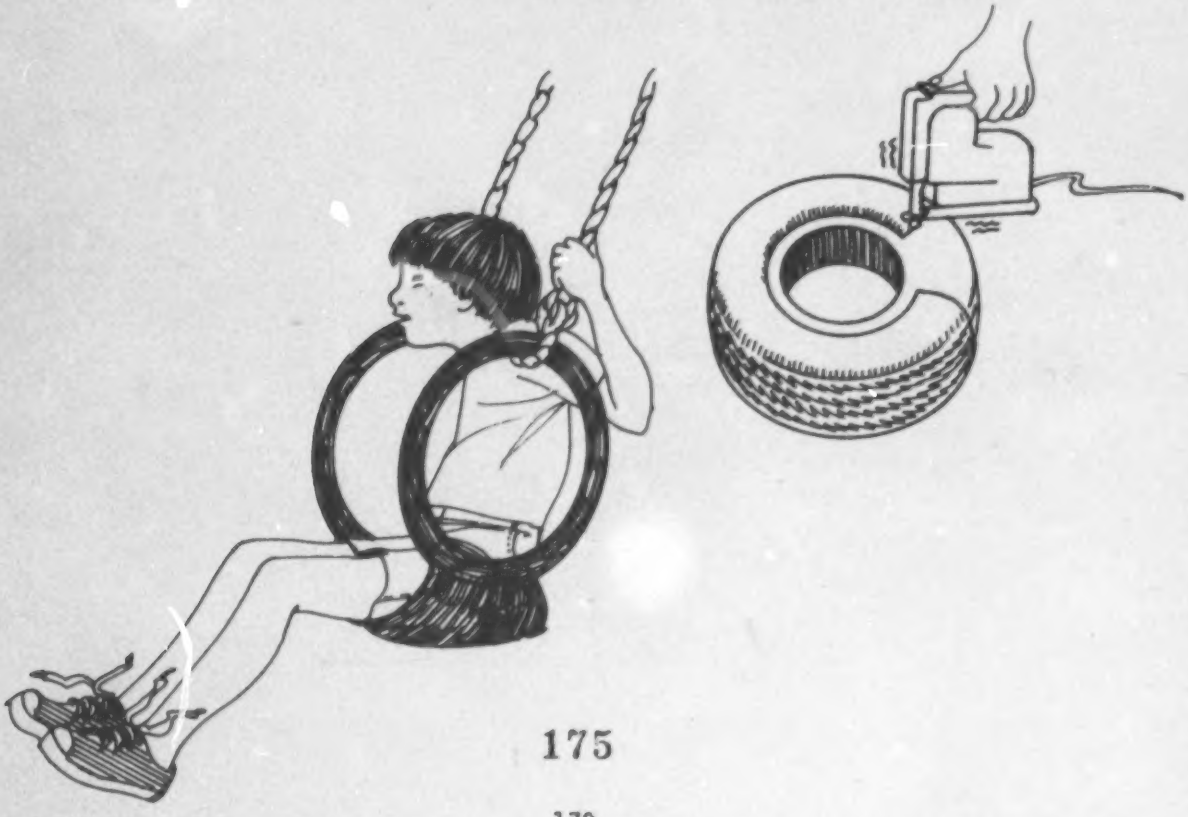


Lounging and Relaxing

There are many other kinds of sitting that do not require sitting upright. Large pillows or inflatable chairs provide one option; bean bags can be fabricated out of cloth or vinyl and filled with foam shredding or styrofoam pellets. The idea is quite popular today and patterns and instructions for their construction are commonly found in home magazines.

Even an old, used inner tube provides a very relaxing place to sit and read or chat.

If it is possible to attach a swing from the ceiling, many nice swing seats can be created, including this unique one made from an old tire.



Couches are always appreciated in the classroom; they can be constructed out of plywood and foam cushions. An old used-car seat may serve the purpose. Also, thrift stores and other salvage-recycling outfits are a good source of inexpensive home furniture such as overstuffed chairs and couches. Even the cushions themselves will be enjoyed in the classroom.

FORM M — Classroom Working and Seating Facilities Checklist

(For use with ACTIVITY VIII in Chapter 8. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

Are there individual desks in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐ If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the desks in the classroom.

The desks are located next to each other..... ☐

Children working at desks have some privacy ..... ☐

A number of desks can be put together to form a larger working surface..... ☐

The desks are free and easy to move ..... ☐

Are there tables in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐ If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the tables in the classroom.

The tables are big enough for only two or three children..... ☐

The tables can be put together to form a larger surface..... ☐

The tables are free and easy to move ..... ☐

Are there working surfaces where children can sit on the floor and work?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Are there classroom facilities for lounging or relaxed sitting?

YES ☐ NO ☐

AFTER COMPLETING FORM M, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

CHAPTER 9

THE FLOOR

Indoors means being on the floor, which is to say that when we are indoors, we are also on "floors." Since many of us spend a good portion of our lives inside closed space, such as homes, schools, and factories, it is not surprising that we take the floor for granted. However, the floor has a significant influence on us. The layout of the floor controls our movements, it defines areas, its covering affects our mood and comfort, and it can affect our interactions with each other. The floor also functions as a piece of furniture. We can work on it, sit or lay down on it, and so on.

Floor Covering

One of the more obvious aspects of the floor is its covering. A number of factors need to be considered in selecting a covering for the floor. Available resources and cost are two such factors. However, issues such as what you want to use the floor for also should be considered. Do you want a floor that is easy to clean, that will not be spoiled by water, that can withstand a great deal of physical abuse, that is comfortable to sit or lie down on, that will absorb noise? These are some of the questions to be considered.

"Soft" floors, such as carpeted floors, are popular in the open classroom because they help reduce noise and accommodate a wide variety of activities (such as working or resting on the floor or tumbling activities) and because they provide an aesthetic and physically comfortable environment.

With the exception of areas in the classroom reserved for water-associated activities, or when the activity would in some way harm a "soft" floor, most of the classroom could be covered with a soft material.

Carpeting is the most common soft floor covering. A wide variety of options, ranging from wall-to-wall carpeting, large carpets, area rugs. throw rugs, etc., are available. New carpeting is expensive although planners of many educational facilities have felt the cost to be justified. However, used carpeting, rugs, etc., are prevalent in most communities and should be considered when cost is a factor. Thrift shops, Goodwill, individual advertisements in the classified section of the newspaper, or donations by individuals or industry are all potential sources of inexpensive carpeting.

Another money-saving option is to join together small pieces of carpeting. Most carpet retailers have carpet "runners" or remnants. They can be easily joined by using a carpet tape that is sold by carpet retailers. It's a wide and strong tape that will hold two or more pieces of carpet securely together.

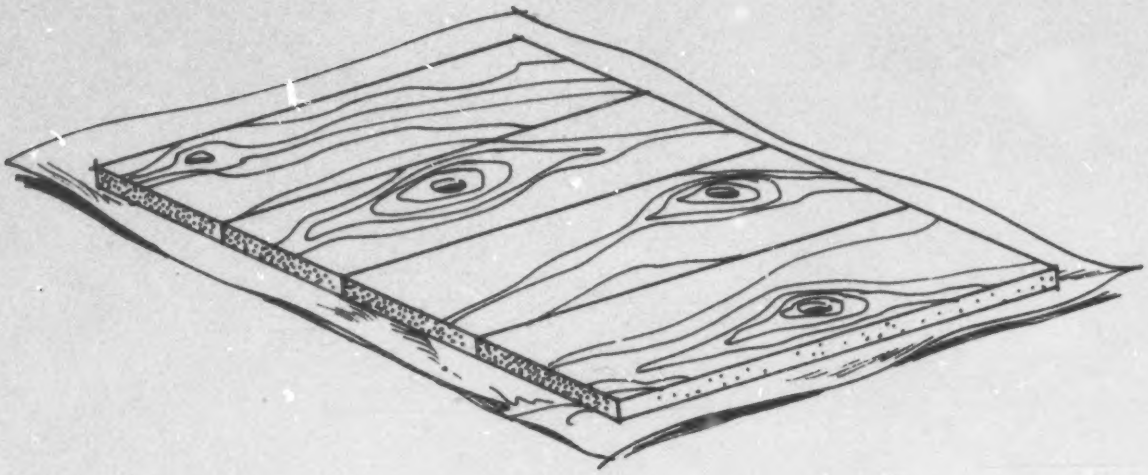
Today there are many forms of "soft flooring" besides carpeting. Artificial grass that can be used indoors as well as outdoors and "astroturf" (used on many football and baseball fields) are two examples.

"Hard floors," such as asphalt tile or hardwood flooring, are also common in the classroom. Such flooring is recommended only where a special purpose justifies its use, such as where a hard non-resilient floor is needed or where there are activities that would be incompatible with soft flooring.

Some situations where hard floors are often desirable are in the paint, crafts, water play, and carpentry areas. One of the most common coverings in such areas is accomplished by the use of asphalt tile or linoleum. Both are easily cleaned, fairly simple to install, and relatively inexpensive.

One inexpensive, do-it-yourself hard floor covering that can be put

down over carpeting is provided by plastic sheeting and boards. You can lay down plastic sheeting (found at most hardware stores and lumber yards) and then cover the sheeting with boards so that it does not get ripped by shoes, etc. Used boards or 1"x12" #4 knotty pine or other inexpensive lumber can be used.



An alternative to the use of plastic and boards is found in the use of 4'x 8' sheets of plywood. Some forms of plywood, such as "physcore" are fairly inexpensive. Again, used lumber should be considered.

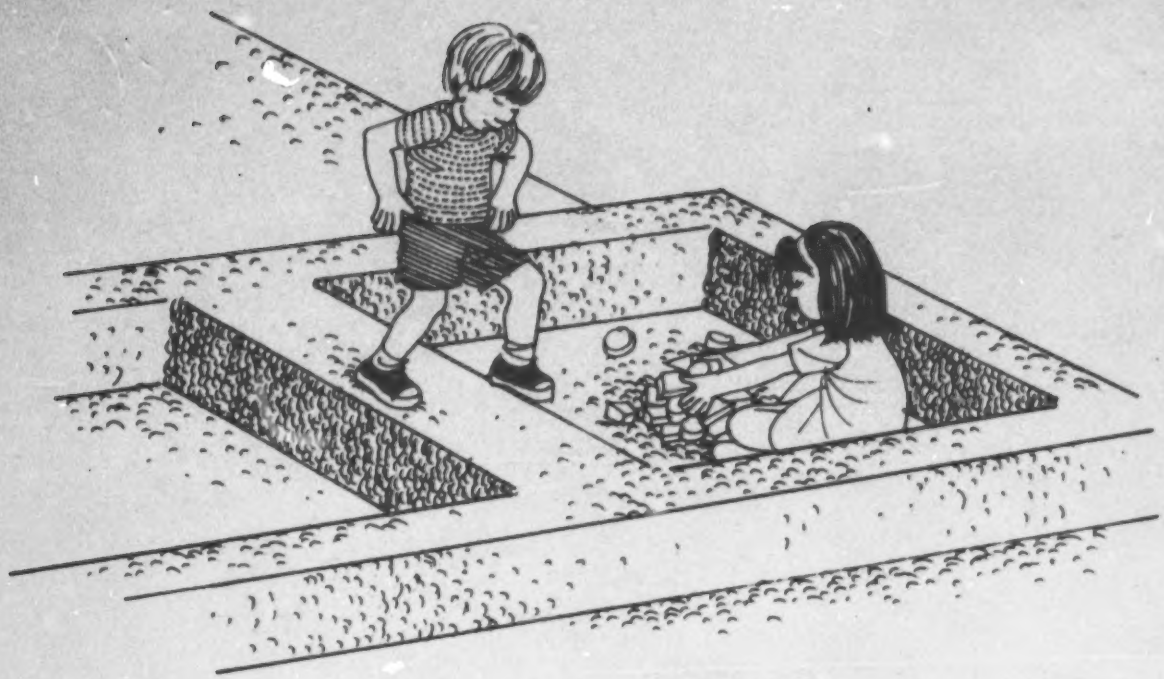
Raised Floor Surfaces and Activity Pits

Besides the kind of covering provided for the floor surface, the surface itself can be altered by either raising or lowering certain portions of it.

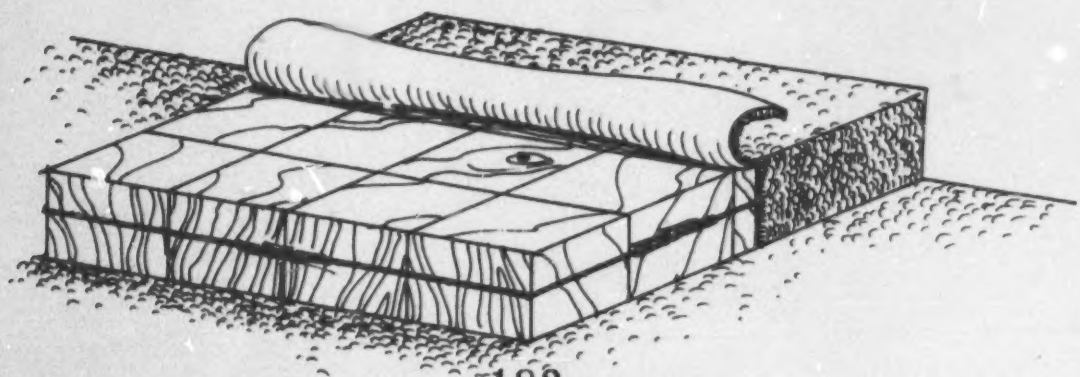
A number of desirable effects can be achieved through this technique. For one, raising or lowering portions of the floor helps direct traffic, just as the use of partitions does. Raised and lowered floor surfaces can also provide a variety of work-play areas and surfaces, and can contribute to the overall attractiveness of the classroom environment.

In many new schools and educational facilities, conversation pits or activity pits are built into the classroom during its construction.

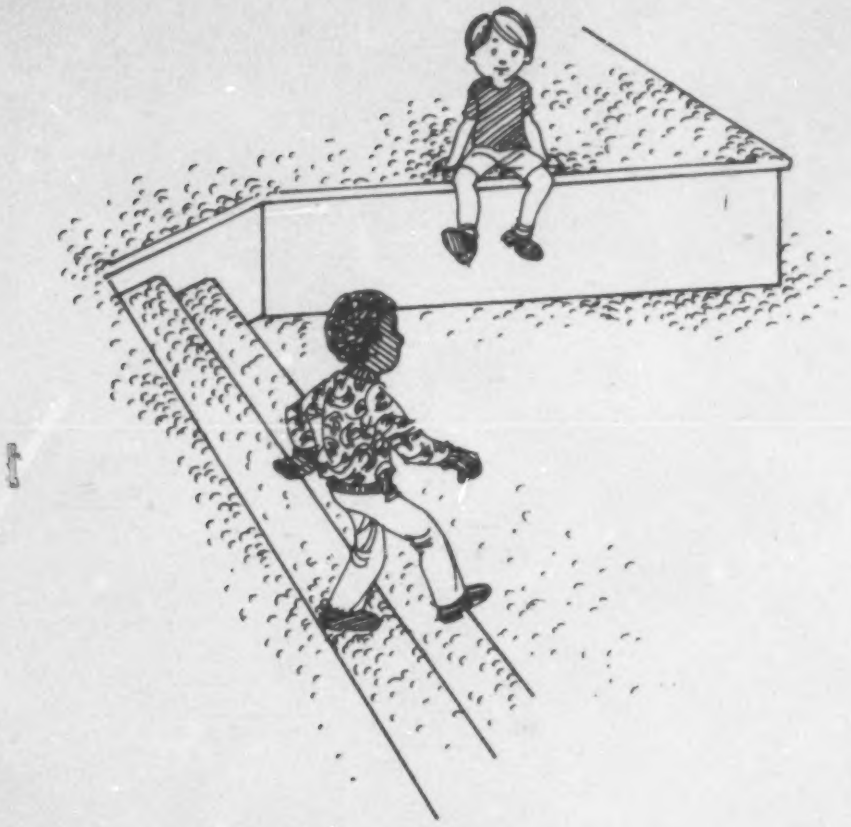
This kind of situation involves major construction and is generally not something that you can accomplish on your own. However, the same basic effect can be achieved by raising a portion of the floor while leaving a "pit" in the middle.



This effect can be achieved in a number of ways. Wooden boxes can be carpeted to use as individual modules that can be put together to form pits or other raised surfaces. They can be attached to a plywood base so that they won't separate or they can be wired together.

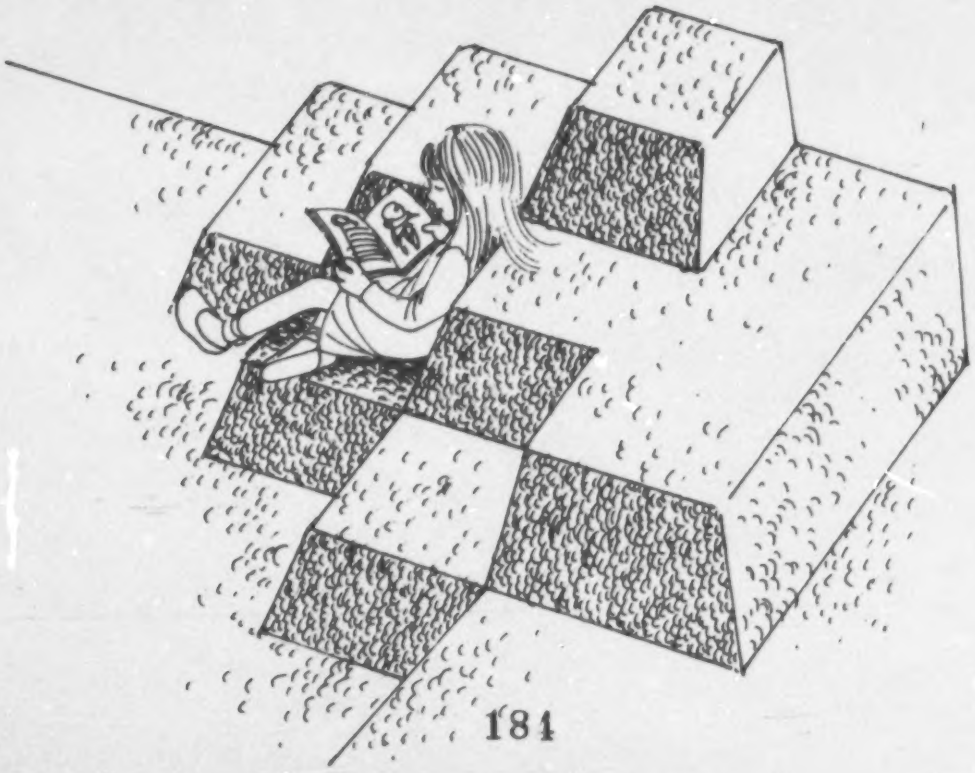


Of course, the floor surface can be raised in such a way that pits are not created; this deviation serves many potential needs as well.

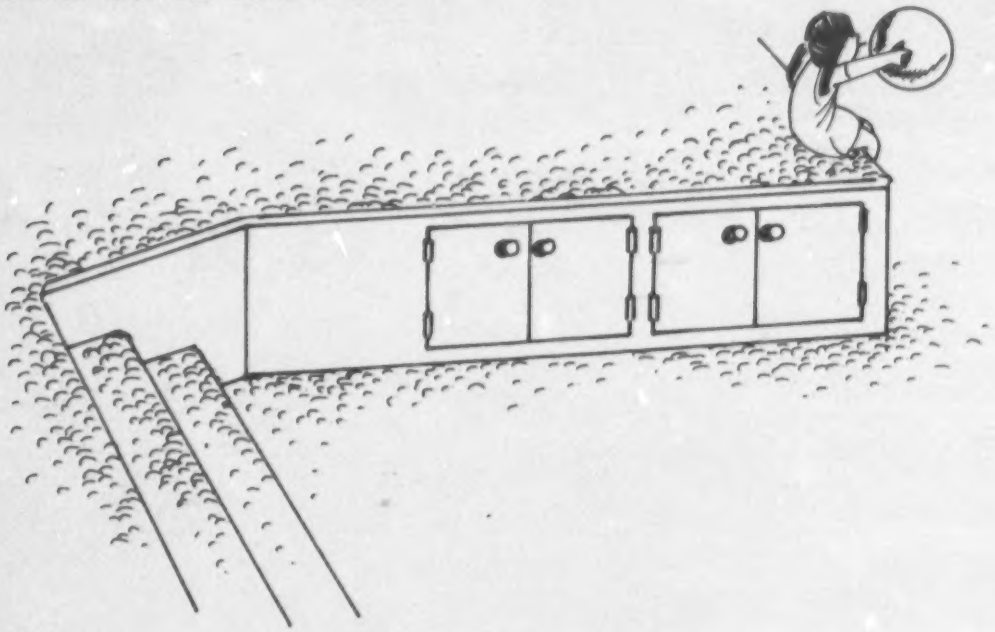


Raised floor surfaces do not need to be built in a stationary position. They can be made as a platform on rollers that can be moved to various areas of the room.

Also, the raised portion of the floor need not form a solid surface or a pit. Something in between can be achieved as well.



Before leaving the topic of raised floor surfaces, we should note that raising the floor provides one means of increasing storage space without decreasing the floor area. All the raised structures can be made with storage space space underneath. This can be achieved by leaving space to slide boxes of material under the raised surface or, as another example, by building cupboards into the structures.



Though raised floor surfaces are not especially difficult to construct, and though they can serve a number of functions and needs, they can also limit the use of general classroom space. Obviously, play involving large wheel toys (like wagons and tricycles) or runnin_ for example, will be restricted if there are no large level areas in the classroom. As in all aspects of classroom arrangement, any decision or change you make not only creates new possibilities in the classroom, but also restricts or limits others. Thus, you must carefully consider your decision in terms of the overall effect you want to create as well as the actual functioning of the total classroom.

FORM N — A Checklist for the Classroom Floor

(For use with ACTIVITY IX in Chapter 9. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

Is there any area in the classroom with a floor covering that would not be harmed by water?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Is there carepting or similar "soft-flooring" in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Are there any activity pits in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Are there different floor levels in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," is there any storage space under the raised portion of the floor?

YES ☐ NO ☐

AFTER COMPLETING FORM N, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

CHAPTER 10

RAISED WORK AND PLAY PLATFORMS: DECKS, MEZZANINES, AND BALCONIES

In the previous chapter, we discussed how the floor surfaces in general can be altered by either raising or lowering certain portions. A more extreme means of altering the floor can be achieved by constructing mezzanines, balconies, or decks.

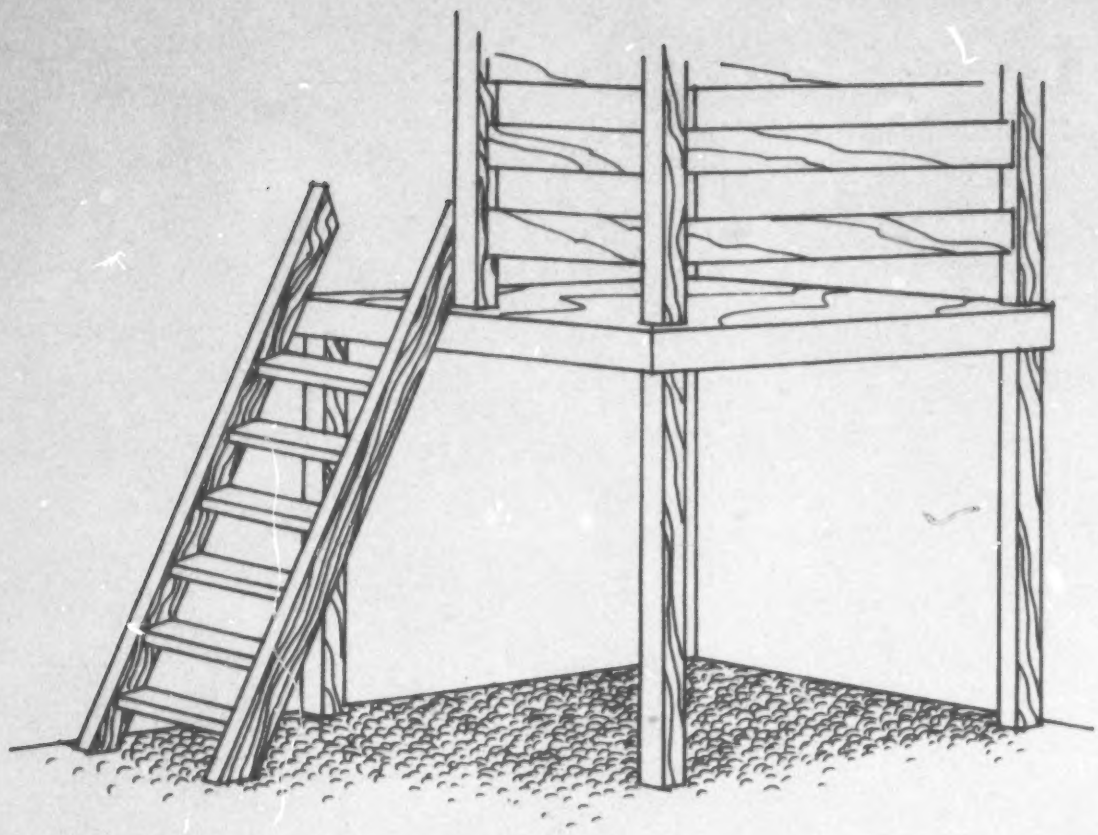
Essentially, each of these is a type of construction in which a new floor surface is created above the existing one. However, as contrasted to examples discussed in the preceding chapter, here the existing floor surface is still usable. That is, the floor surface under the mezzanines, etc., can still be used. This means that the actual amount of floor surface in the room can be increased. Whatever the size of the raised surface, the floor space of the room has been increased by that amount. Not only do mezzanines, decks, and balconies offer a versatile means of increasing the usable space in the classroom, but they also create an exciting physical environment offering a wide variety of work and play spaces.

Though these structures are more complex and thus harder to build than some of the structrues discussed earlier, they are not beyond the means of a reasonably competent carpenter or even a few persistent novices. However, we will not discuss actual plans or "how-to-do-it" ideas because if you decide to construct structures such as these you will most likely contact someone who will know what to do. Keep in mind that as you move toward more complex constructions in the classroom, you will need to consider the building safety codes that apply in your community and your state.

We will discuss balconies, mezzanines, and decks as a group under the general heading of "platforms." There are a number of factors to consider when thinking about building a platform. There are its size, shape, and height, the manner in which it is being held up, the way that children and adults get up to the platform, and the precautions taken to keep children and adults from falling off the platform.

Your budgetary resources and local building codes will probably play a major role in determining the size, shape, and height of any platform. Also, how the structure is to be supported will also have some influence.

Basically you can have construction against a wall, thereby using it to support part of the platform, or away from the wall, in which case the structure must be made free-standing, thus requiring a somewhat more complex form of construction. Building against the wall, particularly in a corner, offers the most economic and stable approach. If you build into a corner, you have the benefits of two walls that can serve not only as stable support for two sides of the platofrm, but also as a way to eliminate exposure to height on two sides of the platform.



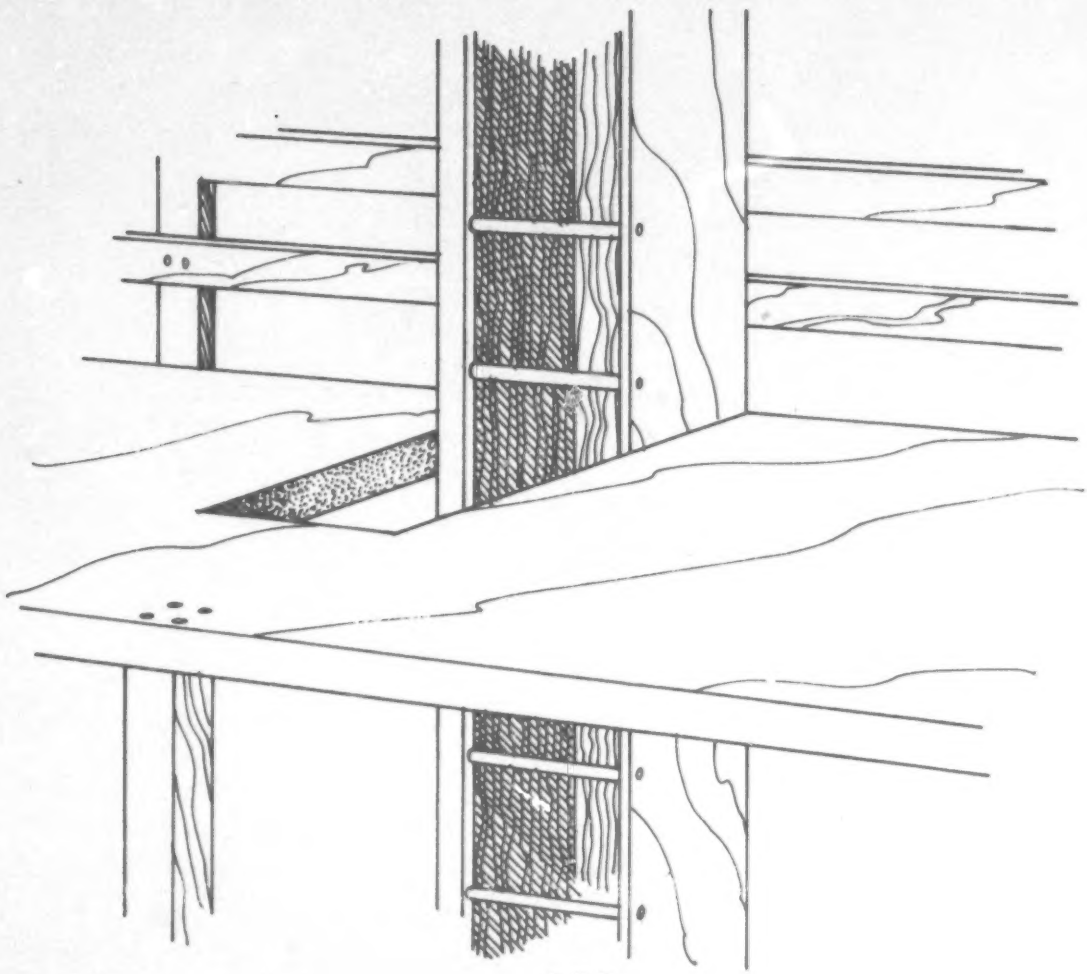
Building the platform away from the wall gives you more freedom in its location but requires a somewhat more complex construction in order for it to be free-standing. However, even if you build against the wall, there are still a number of possible locations. The structure can be built along the wall or so that it goes around a corner.

There are a number of possibilities for providing a means of getting up onto the platform. Basically, they break into three classes: stairs, ladders, and ramps.

Stairs are probably the most complex to construct, but there are many

forms of stair construction and they vary greatly in their complexity and cost. If you do use stairs, you should provide some railing support for children to hold onto while going up the stairs, particularly if there are more than three steps.

Ladders offer another means of access to the platform. Again, many forms of ladders can be provided, including rope ladders. The safest types are built-in or securely attached to the platform. They should be built with rungs that children can easily grasp and the rungs should extend above the platform so that the ladder makes it easy for children to get on and off.



Ramps can also be used as a means of access to the platform although ramps are less useful for platforms built higher than four feet. The ramp should be made of sturdy materials and covered with a friction material so that no one will slip while going up and down. As with stairs, some railings should be provided to protect children from falling off.

Raised platforms can be made safer if some provision is made to protect children from the danger of falling off the platform. Basically, some form of railing should be constructed around the exposed perimeter of the platform. The railing either can be waist-high or can extend from the floor to the ceiling, thus preventing children from climbing over the railing.

Surplus materials, such as a cargo net, can provide protection while at the same time giving an open, airy feeling to the platform space.

FORM O — A Classroom Checklist for Raised Work-Play Platforms

(For use with ACTIVITY X of Chapter 10. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

Are there any raised work-play areas in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," check those statements below that are true for some or all of the platforms.

Adults have easy access to the raised area ..... ☐

Children cannot fall from the raised area ..... ☐

AFTER COMPLETING FORM O, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

CHAPTER 11

ENCLOSED AREAS IN THE CLASSROOM

In the first section of this unit, we discussed a number of types of classroom areas. To review briefly, these were: Private Areas, Learning Centers With and Without Seating Arrangements for Table Work, Indidvidual Free-Work Areas, General Classroom Activity Areas, and Large-Group Free Areas. With the exception of the last two, all the preceding areas can be enhanced by a certain amount of physical enclosure, that is, walls and partitions that partially separate the area from the rest of the room.

Physical boundaries help define the limits of the area, control the number of children simultaneously working or playing in a given area, help channel traffic, and reduce physical, visual, and auditory distraction to the children both within the area and outside the area.

Of course, there may be drawbacks to enclosed areas in the classroom. For one, you may feel a need to have the children in your classroom within easy view. However, it is possible to construct enclosed areas so that they are only partially visually isolated from each other and still easily looked into by the teachers.

Most of the types of enclosed spaces we have been considering can easily be constructed by the use of dividers, furniture, and the existing walls of the classroom. In this chapter, we discuss a special type of enclosed spaces, those actually constructed out of materials as contrasted to those created through the arrangement of classroom furniture.

Most of the mezzanines, decks, and balconies discussed in the previous chapter serve as examples of constructed enclosed spaces. They can be built and equipped to serve as learning centers, private areas, individual study

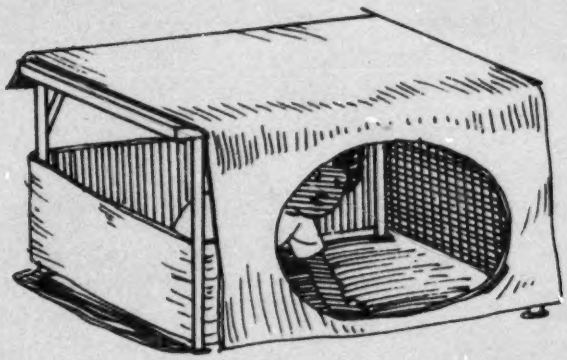
spaces, or simply general play and work areas within the classroom. If easy access is not provided (such as stairs), it is probably less advisable to use such structures for learning centers or resource centers simply because you probably will not feel like clambering up a ladder to meet the needs of children who require help in their work or who need direction.

Your own views on this matter will guide you to a suitable decision. But raised structures can serve in many classrooms as excellent private areas or individual study areas.

There are ways to create enclosed spaces without the effort and expense required to construct raised platforms. Cardboard provides a very flexible and inexpensive material. There are excellent books and resources on the "what and how" of cardboard construction (see references). Today there is a special cardboard on the market for classroom construction. However, sometimes a regular old cardboard shipping crate (such as those used for stoves and refrigerators) can be found and used to construct ideal private areas or play houses.

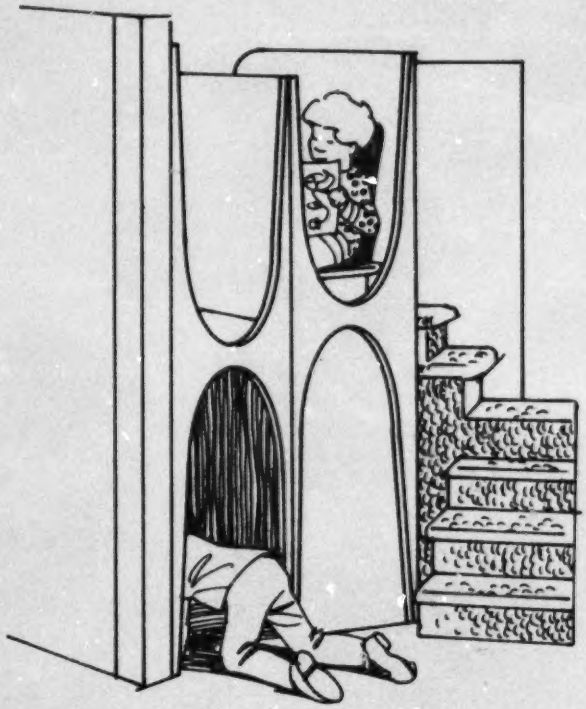
Wood shipping crates can also be found to serve the same purpose; of course, they will last longer than their cardboard counterparts.

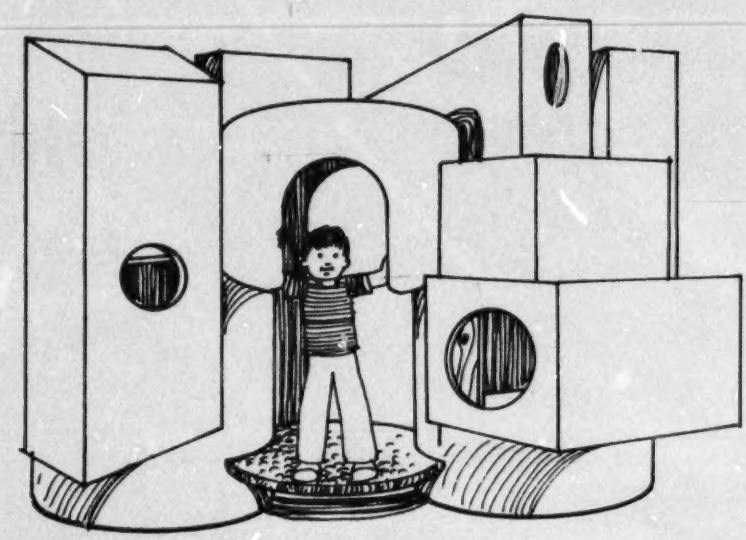
A similar kind of enclosed space can be constructed with the use of a table and cardboard or cloth that can be fastened to the table legs with a strong adhesive tape. Space can be left between the top of the table and the top of the cardboard walls to allow light to enter the area.



With the use of lumber or other building materials, any number of types of enclosed areas can be built. An attractive reading alcove can be constructed out of lumber and upholstered with foam-rubber padding or some other comfortable material.

Exciting spaces with small compartments and passageways can be created with the use of plywood and lumber. Such structures, like raised platforms, generally require the service of a relatively skilled carpenter. However, cardboard is versatile and easy to handle; it can be used in the construction of even complex enclosed systems.





One safety precaution should be kept in mind. Always avoid creating spaces that are so small or complex that children may become trapped or that would prevent adults from being able to get to the children who are inside the enclosed space.

FORM P — Checklist for Enclosed Areas in the Classroom

(For use with ACTIVITY XI in Chapter 11. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

_____ _____

Are there any enclosed areas in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," can adults enter the enclosed area?

YES ☐ NO ☐

AFTER COMPLETING FORM P, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

CHAPTER 12

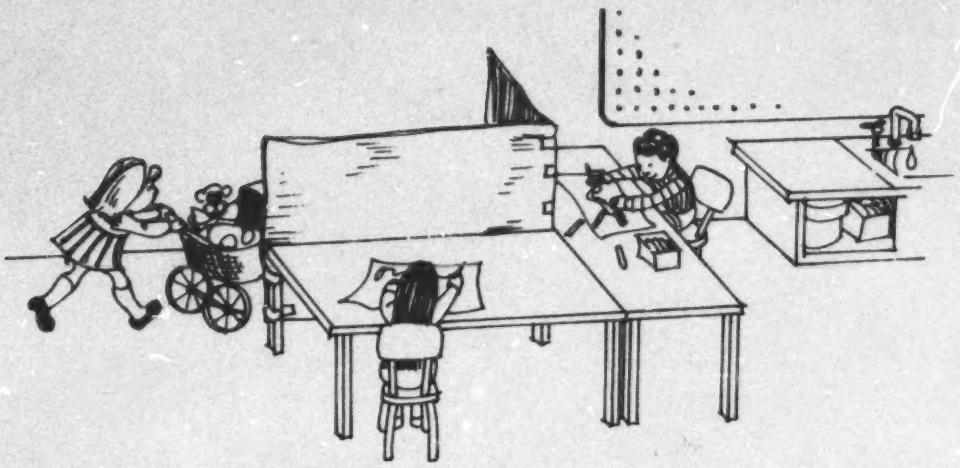
ROOM AND AREA DIVIDERS

This final chapter deals with materials and facilities that can be used as room dividers. Section I of the unit focused on classroom areas and showed that areas can be physically defined in a number of ways. One of these ways involves the use of physical barriers or room dividers. There are a number of advantages associated with room dividers. They can limit the size of an area, clearly mark the boundaries, cut down distraction between areas, reduce classroom noise, and control traffic. This chapter discusses some types of dividers and their arrangement.

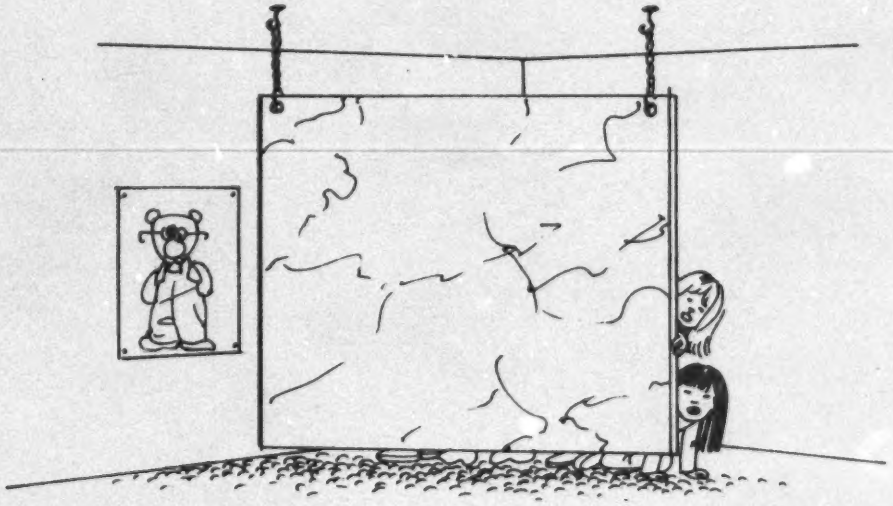
Types of Room Dividers

As we've mentioned throughout Section II, just about any free-standing facilities in the classroom can serve as room dividers. Storage facilities, such as shelves, cabinets, etc., can be used as room dividers if they are capable of standing free from a wall. Even furniture like bookcases, tables, couches, etc., can be used as dividers. Since they are objects that cannot be walked through, they can at least serve as traffic controllers.

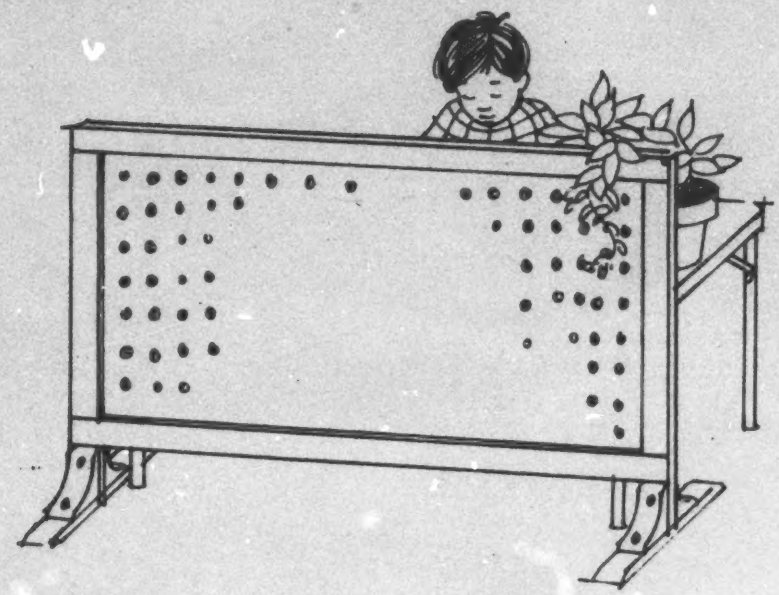
Construction cardboard (see references) can be combined with furniture to produce a more effective divider. For example, shelves that are open on both sides can be transformed into a solid divider by taping cardboard to one side. Likewise, a table can be made into a divider by attaching a sheet of cardboard to its side.



Basically, cardboard or any sheet material (e.g., plywood, fabric, pegboard, etc.) can be used in construction of dividers. The problem for you to solve is simply one of holding the material up. As suggested above, classroom furniture may provide the needed support. Another simple solution is found in hanging sheet material from the classroom ceiling.

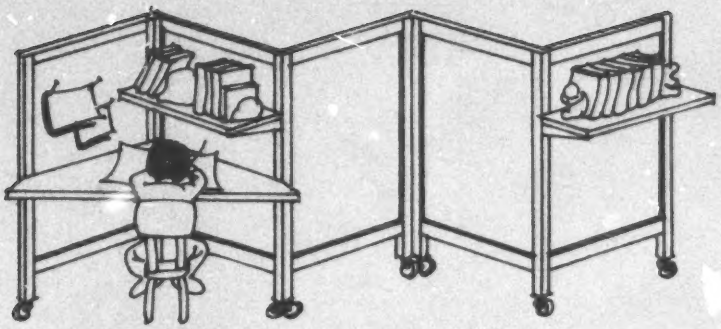


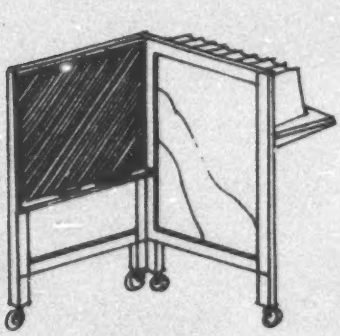
There are many ways of providing support for dividers. A common method in constructing free-standing dividers is to put legs on the dividers.



Making a divider free-standing gives you more flexibility in the classroom arrangement because you can easily move the divider to desired locations. This can be made even easier by putting rollers or casters on the legs of the divider. One drawback to this kind of construction is that it is easy to trip over the legs, but if they are protected from traffic (for example, by the placement of furniture) this problem is overcome.

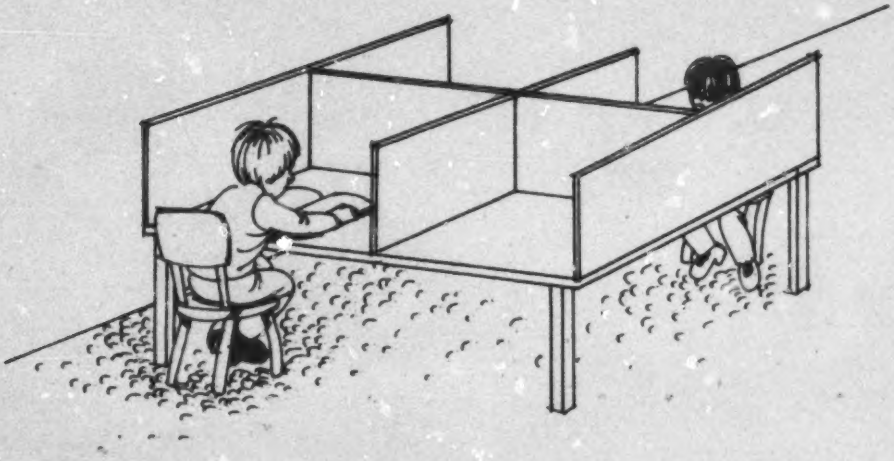
Another way of making a divider that can stand on its own is to construct it out of smaller units that are joined together at angles. In this way the divider provides its own support.





There are a wide range of commercially constructed dividers. Today, even business and industry use area dividers in the arrangement of their offices and working spaces. The Far West Laboratory uses a type of modular construction that consists of dividers to which desks, filing cabinets, cupboards, etc., can be attached.

The size of dividers can vary according to your needs and resources. One means of providing some area separation and of creating individual spaces can be achieved by simply placing small dividers on a table top.



Arrangement of Room Dividers

There are an endless number of ways that dividers can be arranged. We will deal with a few principles and illustrations to give some idea of the advantages associated with various arrangements.

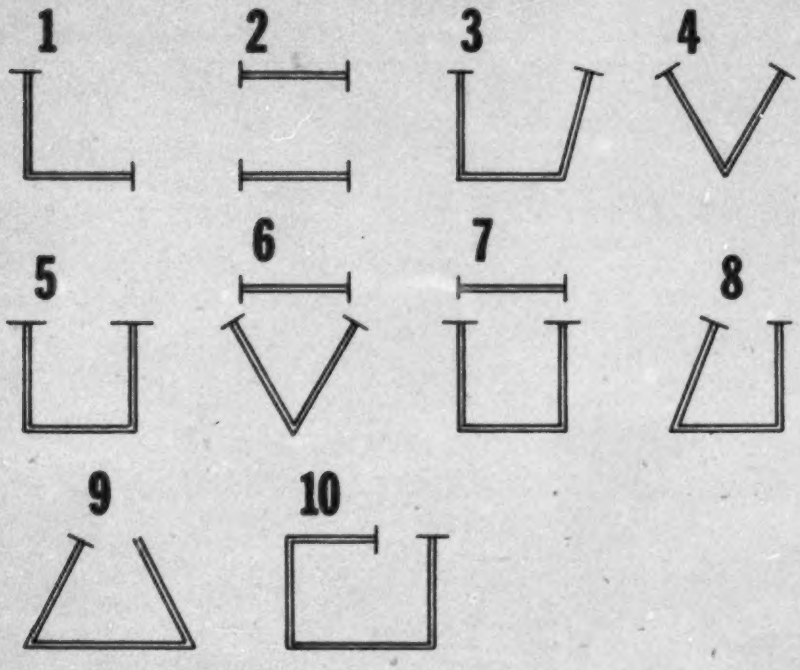
Basically two important factors are involved when you consider the arrangement of room dividers. One of these concerns the number of spaces that can be created through the use of a given number of dividers. For example, in some arrangements, one divider can yield two separated spaces, whereas in other arrangements, only one space results. We call this a "cost factor," that is, the number of dividers it takes to create a given number of spaces.

The second factor concerns the quality of the created spaces or areas. Here we will interpret "quality" as meaning the degree of enclosure provided by the arrangement. Some arrangements provide very little enclosured space and others provide a high degree of enclosure. We can call this second factor the "enclosure factor." In discussing different possible arrangements of room dividers, we will consider both the "cost" and "enclosure" factors. This will allow you to judge some arrangements in preference to others.

Degrees of Enclosure: Let's begin our evaluation by looking at various types of arrangements and their degree of enclosure. In Figure 1 we have illustrated 10 types of single enclosed spaces. We have numbered them 1 through 10; "1" indicates the least and "10" represents the most enclosure. In looking at Figure 1, you might sense that something other than "enclosure" must be involved because some of the different areas (such as 6 and 7 or 9 and 10) appear to have identical degrees of enclosures. You are right. Figure 1 also takes into account the relationship between the size of the opening to the area and the potential size of the area itself. However, we will not discuss this point further since it is complex and not critical to our general purpose.

Figure 1

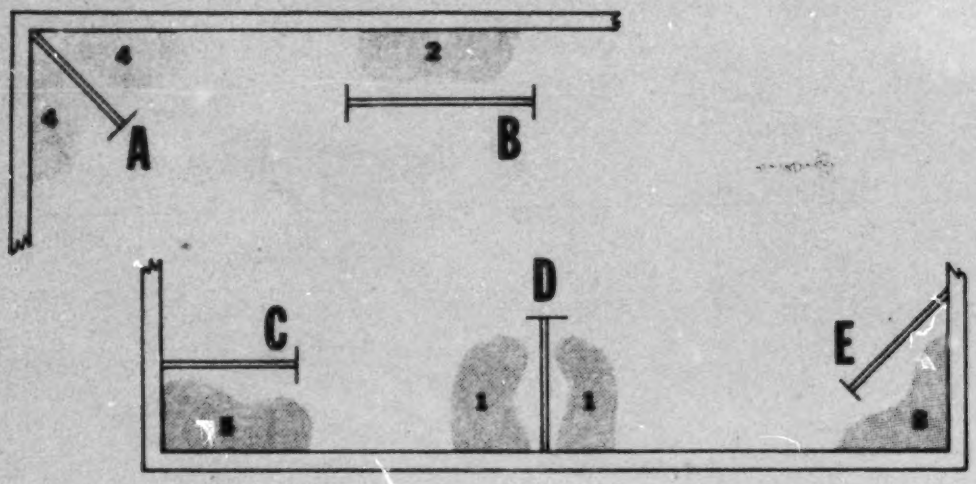
Ten Single Spaces Arranged from Least to Most Enclosure



Various Arrangements and Their Respective "Costs": All walls in the classroom can serve as one of the boundaries of an enclosed area. Therefore, using partitions as room dividers in conjunction with walls gives you "more for your money." This holds even more strongly for cases where a corner of the room is used in conjunction with room dividers. In Figure 2, we have illustrated five (A through E) situations where areas have been created with the use of a single divider and one or more of the classroom walls. The free-form shapes with numerals in them represent the enclosed spaces and the numerals refer to the degree of enclosure as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2

Five Arrangements of a Single Room Divider and One or More Wall Surfaces

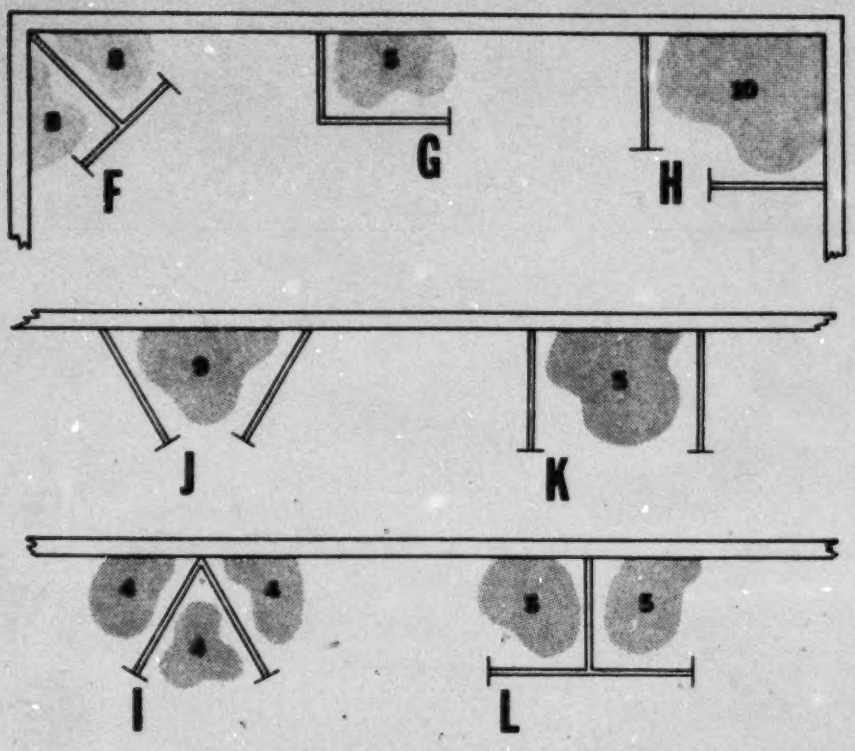


In looking at Figure 2, you can see that arrangements A and D both yield two areas, but the areas in A are more enclosed. Arrangements B, C, and E yield only one area and of these, arrangement E gives the most enclosure, C the next most enclosure, and B the least.

Of course, two or more dividers can be used together; and as before, they can be used in conjunction with the walls or corners of the room. In Figure 3, we have illustrated seven (F through L) additional arrangements. These all use two dividers and one or more wall surfaces. The free-form shapes with numerals in them represent the enclosed spaces and the numerals refer to the degree of enclosure as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 3

Seven Arrangements Using Two Room Dividers and One or More Wall Surfaces

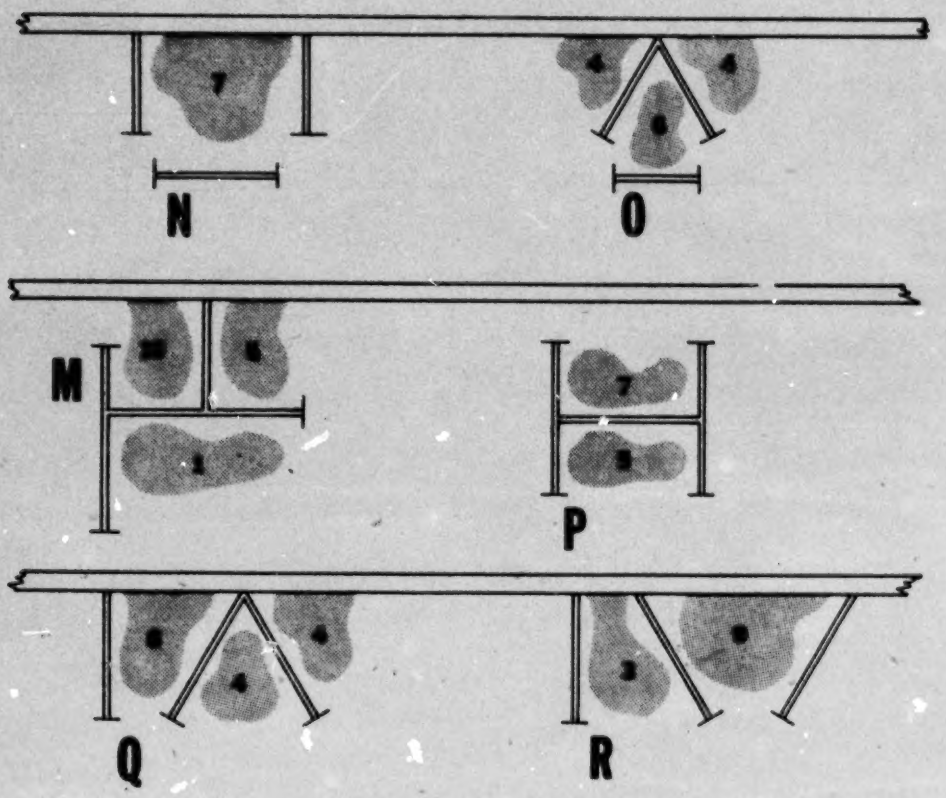


As you can see in looking at Figure 3, even through two dividers and a wall surface are used, arrangements G, H, J, and K yield only one enclosed area. Of these, arrangements H and J give the most enclosure. Arrangements F and L each gives two usable spaces; as you can see, those in arrangement F are more enclosed. The last arrangement, I, gives three usable spaces.

In Figure 4, we have illustrated six (M through R) arrangements that utilize three room dividers and one wall surface.

Figure 4

Six Arrangements of Three Room Dividers and One Wall Surface.



As in Figures 2 and 3, you can see that there is a variation in the number of spaces you can create with a given number of partitions. Arrangement N gives you only one enclosed area although three partitions are used. Arrangement P and R yield two spaces each; and arrangements M, O, and Q produce three enclosed spaces each.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 show the "cost" of various types of arrangements. In some cases, one divider will give you two spaces yet in others two dividers will give you only one space. Of course, this cost is measured only in terms

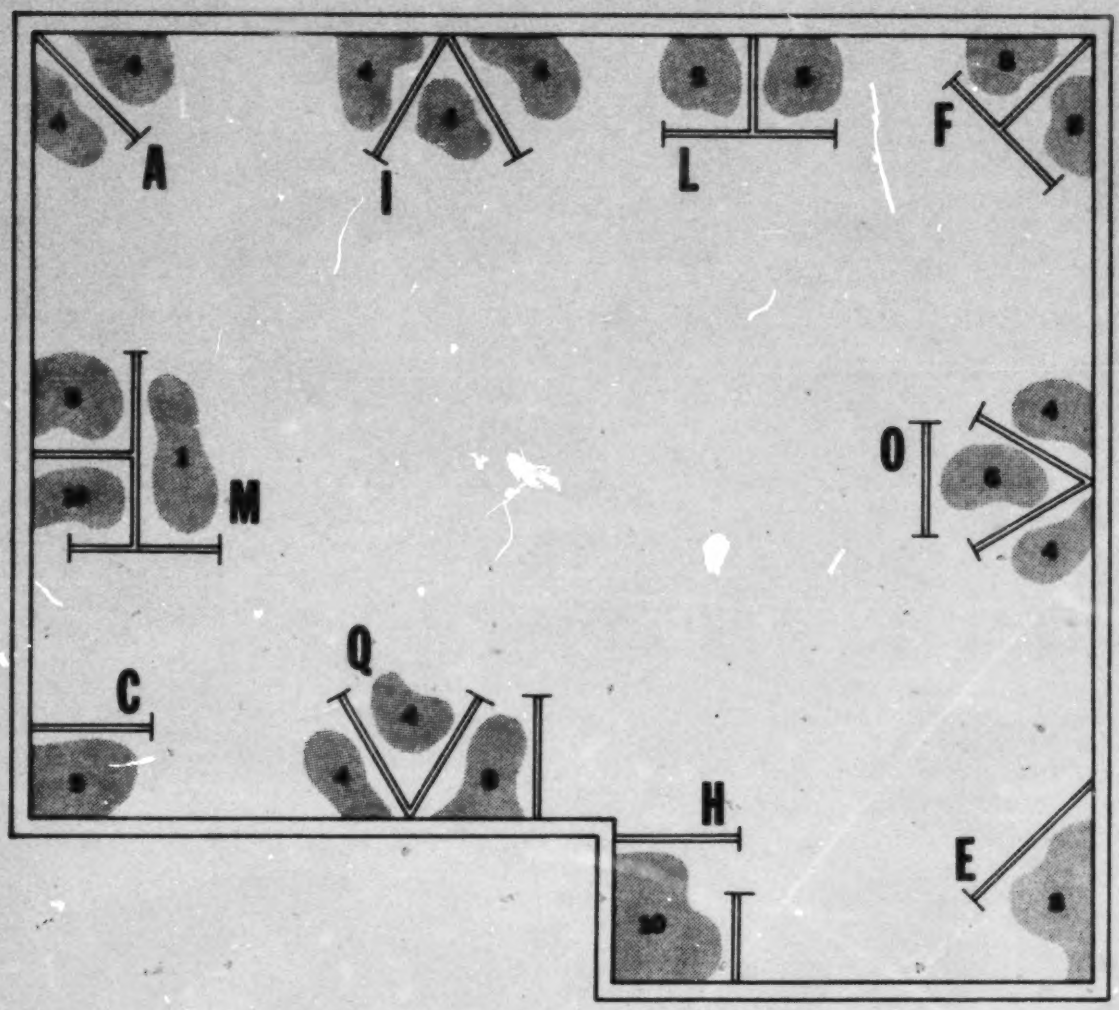
of the number of dividers you use, but if your supply of room dividers is limited, it is a factor to consider.

Now we will consider both the "cost" and "enclosure" factors at the same time to derive a set of recommended arrangements.

Cost and Enclosure as a Basis for Selecting 10 Arrangements: Above we discussed the number of partitions used, the number of spaces produced, and the degree of enclosure in the resulting spaces. By taking these three factors into account, we are able to select 10 recommended arrangements from the 18 arrangements illustrated in Figures 2, 3, and 4. Of course, these recommendations are made in light of only the factors we have discussed. But if you are interested in economical use of your partitions when using them to achieve enclosed areas, then these recommendations should be helpful. In Figure 5, we have pulled together these 10 recommended arrangements.

Figure 5

Ten Recommended Arrangements for Room Dividers



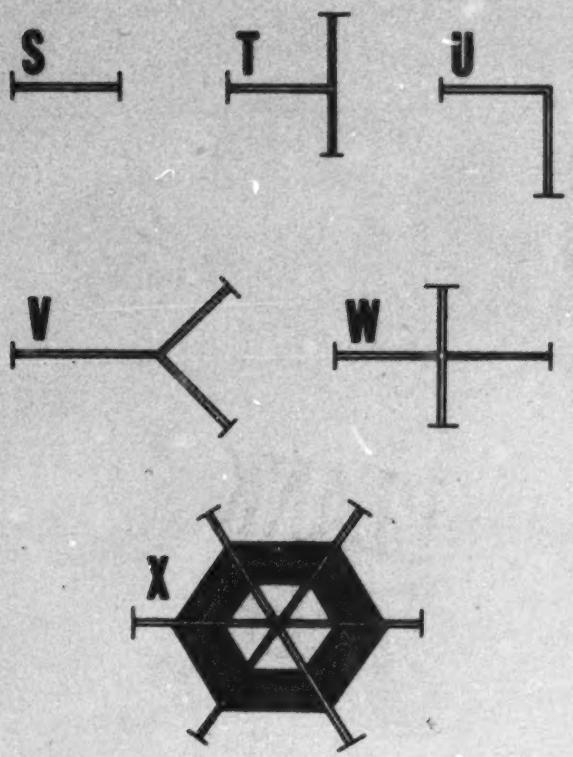
The ten arrangements illustrated in Figure 5 can be used to create all the types of areas we've discussed in this unit. Some of the arrangements, such as L, M, C, and H, can be used in creating either small or large areas. Other arrangements, such as O, Q, and M, are versatile, allowing for the creation of both small and large areas. Those like A, I, F and E are particularly useful in arranging individual work areas.

It is interesting that many of the areas not recommended are also ones that are typically found in many classrooms. We have not recommended them because they either "cost" too much or do not create very enclosed spaces. However, if you are not interested in "cost" or "enclosure," as we've defined these terms, then the others may serve your needs.

Note that many possibilities exist other than those discussed here. One important set of possibilities we have not discussed involves cases where the dividers are not used in conjunction with classroom walls. Dividers can be used in the middle of the classroom as well. Figure 6 illustrates a number of possibilities you might want to consider. We will not discuss them in terms of either "cost" or "enclosure." Notice that arrangement X in Figure 6 provides an interesting combination of trapezoid tables (see Chapter 8) and partitions.

Figure 6

Possible Arrangements of Dividers Without Using Wall Surfaces



FORM Q — Checklist for Room Divider Arrangement in the Classroom

(For use with ACTIVITY XII in Chapter 12. See instructions on page 151.)

COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST BELOW FOR THE OBSERVED CLASSROOM

Have physical boundaries such as classroom furniture, room dividers, partitions, etc., been used to create separated areas in the classroom?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," are any of the arrangements of furniture, partitions, etc., similar to those illustrated in Figure 5 (page 221)?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," check below those arrangements that are present in the classroom (refer to Figure 5, page 221).

ARRANGEMENTS

A.....	E.....
I.....	H.....
L.....	Q.....
F.....	C.....
O.....	M.....

AFTER COMPLETING FORM Q, COMPLETE FORM R (page 227).

FORM R — Recommended Changes in Classroom Facilities

(For use with ACTIVITIES VII-XII in Chapters 7-12. See instructions on page 151.)

AFTER READING THE CHAPTER YOU SELECTED AS YOUR FOCUS AND COMPLETING THE CLASSROOM CHECKLIST FOR THAT CHAPTER, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Which chapter did you focus on? _____

Would you make any changes in the facilities of the classroom you observed?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If "YES," describe the changes you would make. If "NO," indicate why you would not make any changes in the classroom.

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A CHILD WENT FORTH

A 28-minute color film on inner-city and ghetto schools and school building problems. Available on loan without charge from Modern Talking Picture Service, Inc., 2323 New Hyde Park Road, New Hyde Park, L.I., N.Y. 11045, or for purchase at $75.00 from the Library, American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006. A 45-minute version is available for purchase from Larry Madison Productions, Inc., 253 E. 49th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017.

MAKING THINGS TO LEARN, by Allan Leitman.

Available from ECD Film LIbrary, 55 Chapel Str-et, Newton, Mass. 16mm black and white, sound, 11:27 min. $10.00 hadling cost.

NEW LEASE ON LEARNING

A 22-minute 16mm color film about the conversion of "found space" into a learning environment for young children. The space, formerly a synagogue, is now the Brooklyn Block School, one of New York City's few public schools for children ages 3-5.

ROOM TO LEARN

A 22-minute color film on The Early Learning Center in Stamford, Connecticut, an open-plan early childhood school with facilities and program reflecting some of the best current thinking. Prepared by the Early Learning Center under a grant from EFL and available on loan without charge from Association Films, Inc., 600 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022, and for purchase at $125.00 from the Early Learning Center, Inc., 12 Gary Road, Stamford, Conn.

TO BUILD A SCHOOL HOUSE

A 28-minute color film outlining the latest trends in school design. Available on loan without charge from EFL in care of Association Films, Inc., 600 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y., 10022, and for purchase at $93.45 from EFL.

Addresses

ADVISORY FOR OPEN EDUCATION, 90 Sherman St., Cambridge, Mass. 02140

ASSOCIATION FILMS, INC., 600 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL INTERNATIONAL, 1200 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

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U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202

Found Objects — A Checklist

The Object	A Source . . .	. . . And a Use for It
Automobile tires, inner tubes	Garages, tire companies	Swings, climbers, bouncers
Cable spools	Telephone companies	Gymnastic equipment, tables
Scrap telephone wire	Telephone companies	Crafts. Tie wires for plants
Culvert pipes (round or square)	Storm sewage contractors	Tunnels, trains, planters, seats
Old rowboats	Marinas	Outdoor play objects
Packing crates or appliance cartons	Moving companies, appliance dealers or truckers	Playhouses or cardboard constructions
Carpet rolls	Carpet companies	"A-Frame" constructions
Carpet remnants	Carpet companies	Resting mats, floor covering
Cargo nets and twisted rope	Harbor facilities or surplus stores	Climbing nets, support cables
Railroad ties	Salvage companies, lumberyards	Sand or earth retainers and amphitheatres
Felled trees	Construction sites	Climbing trees, stepping blocks, outdoor seating
Excess fill dirt	Construction sites	Earth mounds
Ceramic tiles	Tile stores	Mosaics, color matching, counting games
Scrap paper	Printing shops	Drawing, painting, cut-outs
Wire mesh	Hardware suppliers	Animal shelters
Scrap lumber and plywood	Lumberyards, building sites	Small constructions
Milk and soft-drink crates	Food markets, soft-drink companies	Wagons, tote trays, storage cubbies
Fruit cartons	Produce stores	Record cabinets, storage, bookshelves and scooters
Cloth remnants	Sewing shops, tailors, garment manufacturers, your attic	Painting and collage work, wall hangings
Bricks, masonry blocks, clay flue tiles	Brickyards, building and demolition sites	Spacers for bookshelves
Scrap linoleum	Flooring companies	Work surface coverings
Juke-box record selector	Vending machine companies	Audio tape selector
Polyethylene rolls	Building supply companies	Lining for clay, sand or water containers
Computer tape or movie film cans	Computer companies, film supply houses	Tape together for seats
Corrugated cardboard	Paper or building supply companies	Variety of constructions
Movable type	Printing houses	Block and letter printing
Plastic garbage cans	Hardware stores	Clay storage, catch-all containers
Pipe scaffold	Painting or plastering contractors, building supply stores	Climbing or display rack
Used washing machines, stoves, refrigerators	Appliance dealers or department stores, classified advertisements	Kitchen equipment
Old ladders	Fire department	Gymnastic equipment
Surplus plant material	Nurseries, garden centers, park department	Planting and landscaping
Pipe lengths	Plumbing companies	Pipe frame constructions
Telephone poles	Telephone companies	Climbing and jumping constructions
File cabinets	Office supply and surplus stores	Office equipment
Adding machines, typewriters	Office supply and surplus stores	Learning media
Discarded automobile	Junk yards or police department	Play car
Old mattress	Your basement	Jumping pad, reading corner

Check with your local sanitation department for discarded bulk objects.

Sources for Help

After your group has established its basic objectives and organization, it should approach the federal, state, municipal or neighborhood agencies that are set up to advise and assist. Help may come in the form of direct funding or procedural information for establishing your center. The bibliography in this report lists useful publications concerned with environment planning for your children.

These national organizations are concerned with the planning of preschool centers.

1. Association for Childhood Education International
   3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20016
2. Child Welfare League of America
   67 Irving Place
   New York, N.Y. 10010
3. Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc.
   P.O. Box 446
   Melbourne, Florida 32901
4. National Association for the Education of Young Children
   1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20009
5. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
   Office of Child Development
   Washington, D.C. 20201
6. Office of Economic Opportunity
   Project Head Start
   1200—19th Street, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20506
7. Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.
   1426 H Street, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20005

Useful information is also available from state universities, municipal and state agencies concerned with child care facilities, and the local day care association. Some of these agencies are under your local Department of Health. Don't overlook neighborhood civic associations and community action groups, business organizations, nearby elementary schools, high schools and universities, especially where education or architectural curricula are offered.

Licensing requirements and codes

There is no such thing as a national uniform building or licensing code that pertains to day care or early learning facilities. Each jurisdiction is autonomous, and therefore the regulations vary widely. National codes are recommended by the National Board of Fire Underwriters or Life Safety Code of the Fire Protection Association, but local jurisdictional agencies take precedence. If pending federal legislation is enacted for setting up federal child care centers, it will probably result in the adoption of national codes as the basis for licensing.

Nevertheless, there are many similar requirements in the various health and building codes throughout the country. In outline form, the following general features appear in most of the more detailed codes; however, your local codes must be followed in all specifics.

Check with these regulatory agencies:

- *State Health Department*—for licensing requirements
- *Building Department*—for compliance with the building code
- *Zoning Department*—for compliance with zoning codes
- *Department of Social Services*—for related services it can provide
- *Local Board of Education*—in certain localities this is required
- *Fire Marshal*—exit requirements and combustibility characteristics of the building

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